

THE
Fruitless Repentance;
OR, THE
HISTORY
OF
KITTY LE FEVER.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

Printed for F. NEWBERRY, the Corner of St.
Paul's Church Yard.

MDCCLXIX.



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Miss LE FEVER.

LETTER I.

Sir GEORGE HENDON *to* Lord CLERAGE.

I Am glad, my Lord, to find that your soul is not so uniformly base, as I began to believe it was. Your love for Miss Le Fever, your little artifices to recommend yourself to her favor, and your mortification at your ill-success, were all natural to your youth,

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B

and

and the sanguine disposition you are possessed of. But to overwhelm her with affliction, to hurry a young fellow into despair, and transgress the laws both of humanity and your country, can never be pardoned by either your friend, or your own heart, but upon ample compensation.

To bring back the injured fugitive, is a duty you owe yourself, to wipe out the remembrance of the horror and misery he must have endured, (by providing him a good living) essential to your future reputation with me: but in order to atone for your glaring, your almost unequalled and actually capital offence, it is incumbent upon you to promote that union, you have hitherto laboured to retard. That spark of benevolence that still subsists in your breast will prove the bane of all your enjoyments, unless you satisfy its just demands by the conduct I now prescribe.

I am astonished, that any consideration could prevail upon you, to call in so notorious

torious and callous-hearted a villain to your assistance as Johnson, had he not sufficiently evinced the corruption and cruelty of his nature on a late black occasion.

I hope your repentance is sincere, and will be found permanent—I would therefore spare you as much as possible, but I must forget I am a man, before I can reflect upon so atrocious an action with temper, and cease to be your friend, when I can forbear condemning and lamenting your share in it. Was it for this purpose, my Lord, that heaven called you to the possession of a plentiful fortune—can you conceive that your intellectual faculties were bestowed upon you, only to enable you to demonstrate, that there is no monster like a *human* one?

Do but once think upon the horror, the anguish, you have prepared for yourself, if you have put it beyond your power, to speak peace where you alone have been the cruel spoiler of it. To see

the object of your tenderest affection (whose principles might charm even devils into admiration) blasted at this blooming period by an unmerited calamity, which you are conscious was derived merely from yourself could it be endured? do you imagine, as she strongly asked you, that the cry of the widow will not prevail against you; that your proceedings against the innocent will fail to call down vengeance upon your head?

O! fly to save yourself from such deep perdition, and plead the impetuosity of youth; the fatal influence of power, and the dire effects of passion and immorality when let loose but for a moment, if possible to regain, and by degrees re-establish yourself in my late good opinion.

As to the hireling, the executioner of your unworthy wishes, he should most assuredly be given up to public justice, if your fate was not so irrevocably connected. This is the second time he has forfeited his neck—a sum of money redeemed

deemed it before—but at what a price is he now secured—*Lord Clerage's* tainted honour is his happy protection.

Indeed, I am obliged to labour hard for you upon this occasion. Rashness, inhumanity, and villainy, are a horrid compound—yet all these have predominated in a soul, that I believed replete with valuable inclinations; and dashed with the slightest tincture only of human frailty. I own, the education of young noblemen contributes largely to inspire them with tyranny and presumption: flattered for practices they ought to be ashamed of, and extolled for sentiments that are utterly unworthy of them, they at length conceive they are to bear all before them. To be refused by an humble female, or rivaled by the man of limited expectations, is, perhaps, the last mortification they can sustain: they will subdue the poor creature, they fancy they love, to evince their arrogance, disdains all bounds, and ruin the being they affect to despise

to gratify their revenge: and having performed actions, for which a less *noble* villain would have suffered the most ignominious punishment, meanly hide behind their title, and by a judicious distribution of their fortune rest secure.

I shall be impatient to hear the success of what you promise to undertake, it is a nice and dangerous affair, and must not transpire — and shou'd you be enabled to shake off the weight of your iniquity by Leicester's redemption, compleat the work, by seeing them happily united.

You have given me a right to be as severe, or what is equally as unpleasant to you, as serious, as I please: and I will admonish you, that there is an hour approaching, in which you will find more felicity in the bare recollection of having acted worthily, than all your idle pursuits could bestow, even in the instant of your greatest enjoyment.

I shall not now speak to many particulars that are yet unanswered in your letter —

ter—but if by accomplishing what I trust is the wish of your heart, you render yourself the instrument of returning happiness to this deserving family; I will make you sensible of such enormities in your intentions as well as actual practice, as shall make you shudder at the retrospect of your danger, and inexpressibly rejoice in your great deliverance.

I am,

O CLERAGE, do I live to hesitate
in subscribing myself,

Your friend,

G. HENDON.

LETTER II.

Lord CLERAGE to Sir GEORGE HENDON.

BE satisfied, Sir George Hendon, my punishment, my sufferings, will not be inadequate to my crimes, however enormous in your sight.

B 4

Leicester

Leicester — the late formidable and happy Leicester—how shall I dare to tell it—but he is my worthy friend, far, far beyond all human relief, or rather has attained a most glorious deliverance from injuries and persecutions.

The instant I had dispatched my last letter, I flung myself into a chaise, and was conveyed with all possible expedition to Johnson's brothers in Kent. He had called there that very morning, and left them with a resolution to take a trip to France.

Remorse affliction, in conjunction with this mortifying piece of information, quite overcame me; and I could only intreat them to send a messenger express after him, to recall him on the most important of occasions.

He was found at an inn in Dover, from whence I received the unexpected and heart-wounding intelligence that the poor fellow is no more.

And

And is this the consequence of all my flattering schemes—the injured Leicester has indeed most effectually escaped the toils of villainy and injustice—but tell me George, if innocence and virtue are the peculiar care of heaven: why was my Le Fever permitted to incur this most trying of calamities?

I can never behold her more — O, let not death be hereafter esteemed a misfortune; since it would prove the everlasting shelterer of the villain, as well as the mighty deliverer of the persecuted and oppressed.—To blow out my wretched brains would be an easy, practicable, tho' desperate action: but to sustain the complicated evils I have incurred—is the master-stroke of courage, and the sublimity of resolution.

Yet I will live — difficult as the task may be, I will encounter the tender sorrow, the deep searching reproaches of the sweet ruined girl—I will support her worthy mother—and if my whole fortune

could atone the error of my conduct, how gladly would I resign it all.

To attempt to give you an idea of what I suffer would be the height of absurdity—nor is your just resentment, your bitter condemnation, unfelt by the undone

CLERAGE.

LETTER III.

From the Same to the Same.

JENNY has just left me in tears of disappointment and apprehension, tho' I have concealed the fatal news in part from her knowledge.

“O, Sir, cried she, miss Le Fever will never survive his loss! I could almost break my heart to see her so wretched.”

Had there been a means of recovering him—I would have given such proofs of my contrition and generosity, as must have silenced not only the most rigid tongue of justice, but induced you unreluctantly

luctantly to have received me to my wonted place in your esteem of friendship—for I would have vanquished—yes, George—your arguments should have had due weight—I would have vanquished even my own corrupt heart. Their union should have been the darling object of my attention—their comfortable provision my whole care, and, to compleat the affair, I would have bestowed the precious girl according to her wishes with my own hand—and a perpetual amity should have subsisted amongst us. But now, what is in my power but unavailing sighs and endless confusion!

Restored to new life—Leicester is not only in safe, but recoverable circumstances—the wretch that transacted the infamous business, had the cruelty to impose the falsehood of his death upon me, in order to prevent my generous purpose of giving him back to liberty, and his Le Fever.

How will you shudder, when you hear

where he has lodged him? a receptacle for the insane, must be a dreadful situation to a rational and human being—but he tells me there was no other remedy, and that, if I am so extravagant as to procure his enlargement, I shall expose both him and myself to a scandalous prosecution. But shall I suffer him to languish out his days in such inconceivable misery, from so paltry a consideration? no, if redressing the injury, cannot obliterate the sense of ill in his breast—I will welcome the ignominy I have incurred, as a blessed exchange for guilt and anguish.—If he loved like me, could he once entertain the contemptible expectation, that self would be capable of subduing every other feeling—what, should the tears of my L.e Fever continue to flow, to secure me from censure, in convenience or suffering?—should her soft bosom be for ever deprived of hope and consolation, to save a whole herd of villains from the severest torture?—I scorn the thought, and therefore,
Sir

Sir George, you must not be surpris'd, if the world should pick a lesson of instruction, and be furnished with a tale of wretchedness, at the expence of your once happy friend.

Yet I will proceed with the utmost caution, and, if it be possible, avoid every other condemnation than those of friendship and conscience.

How shall I get him conveyed from Hogfden? I believe I myself must go down,—I should not wonder if despair and ill treatment should have rendered him as frantic, as the worst patient in the house.

Adieu, George, and allow me, in respect of my repentance for this time, to add my usual conclusion of,

Your's, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER

LETTER IV

ARTHUR JOHNSON *to Lord CLERAGE.*

SO, my Lord, I find that the very service I have rendered you, at the hazard of my neck, has excluded me from your favor: but however you may feel yourself disposed towards me in your present penitential fit—let me conjure you to pay proper attention to yourself.

Was ever such romantic nonsense heard of—the Lady has offered herself to your acceptance, you say, (the very purpose for which you incited me to turn knave,) and yet, like a whining school-boy, you will part with your sweet-meats to patch up your reputation, and cry for them all the rest of your days.

Besides, what opinion do you think the Lady must entertain of both your gallantry and love? Refuse her—cast her off—force her upon another—and in the very moment too, when she has an opportunity
(and

(and is most sensibly disposed to embrace it,) to become Lady Clerage—and secure her self from all blame.—It is to purchase *his* liberty that she now consents—not to gratify any little vanity, ambition, or fickle inclination, that will be busy in the human heart.

Not to dwell, however, upon what you may call conjectural motives, let us return to your own feelings.

Remember, my Lord, before it is too late, that Sir George Hendon, with all his heroics, could but poorly support your languishment when she is irretrievably lost. Have you once considered, what it is to know the object of your dearest affections in the possession of your rival, and such a rival.—O dignity, O resolution, where are ye fled!

Have I not frequently heard you prove, that your heroes, of every denomination, are but a tame kind of madmen. —Generosity, compassion, benevolence, are very pretty expressions, and without doubt
tickle

tickle the ear, but how far would they go towards healing a wounded heart.

You cannot upon this occasion suspect me of interestedness—what advantage should I derive from your happiness—taking me in my villainous, my unfocial character: but how far soever I may have been drawn from the letter of integrity—love, was my first seducer, (a passion whose influence you are no stranger to,) my second, friendship—and Lord Cle-
rage, the object of it.

I do not meanly sue for a reconciliation—it is for obliging, not offending, that I am cast out—I can patiently endure.—But beware how you overcharge your own soul.

I am, &c.

H. JOHNSON.

LETTER

LETTER V.

Lord CLERAGE to ARTHUR JOHNSON,
Esq;

YES, Johnson, you well know the way to my heart, and I take shame to myself, for having divided a fault with you, that was wholly my own. You have, my friend, awakened me to a due sense of that happiness that now awaits my acceptance, and Sir George's pen is exercised in vain.

A letter, I suppose of honest exhortation, lies at this moment on the table before me unopened.—I will not be warped from my purpose, I will not be deluded from the delightful path I have attained.—My Le Fever's lips have pronounced the happy invitation, nor will I fail to make one more grand push, to accomplish what I have so long sighed for.

But, Arthur, you ought not to have taken such cruel steps with respect to poor Leicester.

Leicester. I will only call on my Le Fever, and inform her of all I have done for her sweet sake, or, in other words, communicate the fond hope of beholding her lover once again, before I restore him to liberty.

My Le Fever, Arthur, for are you not my witness, that I have paid the stipulated price.

“ Deliver, Mr. Leicester, said she, from
“ the miserable state to which he is now
“ reduced :” and if you can accept of me,
(charming creature, my own soul is not a
more valuable possession) “ I will marry
“ you, live with you, love and bless you.”

That I was surpris'd by an ugly concatenation of circumstances at that period, into such over-strained generosity, that I declined what I would almost die to obtain, I cannot deny ; nay, I madly promised to promote, what I beyond measure abhor.—But when I recollect how desperate an appearance matters bore
when

when the rash vow escaped me, I cease to wonder at it.

My amiable girl half distracted—the priest out of my reach, it was my interest to soothe, to flatter, to console her—but as the scene is so happily changed, and the proposed terms so perfectly complied with—it is impossible to adhere—in short, Arthur, we will talk no more of it.

If this miserable *thread of the linen vestment of Azaa* had never fallen in my Le Fever's way, I had now been in possession of the highest bliss, and the approved friend of Sir George Hendon. Instead of which, I am involved in an ocean of mortification and perplexity.

I am, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

From the Same to the Same.

TAKE an account of my visit to my beloved Le Fever.

Muffled up in my great coat, I enquired for Mrs. Stubs, and was shewn into her apartment agreeable to my wishes.

Madam, said I, to the forbidding countenanced (tho' truly good-natured woman) I would speak with Miss Le Fever in your parlor, if you will please to permit me—I have news for her that will be highly grateful, but must be communicated in private.

It is not for me, my Lord, returned she, to comment either upon your present request, or late behaviour: my parlor, I do assure you, is much at your service, if the young Lady has no objection to your proposal.

She will not—she cannot, Madam, cried I a little impatiently, if you only make her properly acquainted with it—suspicious
and

and officious fool, added I, when she had shut the door after her; what bright apprehension can now have seized there?

The dear creature guessed my business, and flew down in an instant.

Have my prayers been heard, my Lord, cried she, the moment she beheld me, is my most anxious wish accomplished?

Mr. Leicester, Madam, returned I, is both safe and well (in these cases, Arthur, it is not necessary to keep strictly to the truth) and will be in town this very evening.

Her joy—well Leicester, was the object of that you know. But I cannot say her gratitude quite answered my expectations—she seemed to regard my conduct, as mere matter of atonement.

I said a vast deal, in order to convince her that I had no hand in his kidnapping—but in spite of all my rhetoric, I could perceive strong traces of incredulity in her countenance. She was however so gracious, as to yield to my intreaties, to conceal

conceal the cruel suspicions she was pleased to entertain of me from her favourite; tho', I am afraid, there was much more consideration for him than your humble servant, even in that concession.

I was, you may be sure, very impatient to know what I had to depend upon—but to introduce the important subject, required much address and delicacy.

I think, Madam, said I, I have heard you say Mr. Leicester is unprovided for. I am sorry, it is not at present in my power to evince the sincerity of my inclination to serve him. A friend of mine indeed is lately dead, who possessed the perpetual advowson of a living, somewhat about three hundred pounds a year. I know the family have not yet intrusted the temporary possession of it to any one, and that I could immediately procure it for your friend; but then it is not the certainty I could wish, as there is a son now almost eighteen, who will perhaps require the resignation, so soon as he is duly qualified—
unless

unless he should be able to obtain (as I find he has a strong desire) some other genteel provision in the intermediate time; you will take the trouble, however, to mention it to him, and let me know his sentiments.

I dare believe, Sir, said she with visible pleasure, that Mr. Leicester would be extremely glad to accept of your Lordship's patronage and protection: he has both an honest, and a grateful heart—and as he will be ignorant of the quarter from whence his injuries——

Hold, Miss Le Fever, said I, even admitting that I was ever so culpable—*when the wicked man turns from his wickedness,* to talk to you in your own pious strain, does he not find favour with the most Supreme of Beings? What then, may not one mortal hope from another?—You make a wide distinction, it is plain, between the hour of supplication, and the attainment of your wishes—but my memory is retentive, my expectations

tations high raised—I have performed the undertaking you incited me to, and doubt not, but the proposed gratification will be mine.

You have seen the fairest sky obscured by dark heavy clouds—you have seen—but nothing can give you an idea of the change the few words produced in the most lovely of features.

I acknowledge, my Lord, said she, you have the advantage of me—that I made you the extravagant offer of my hand and person I will not attempt to deny, nor, if *you* can submit to demand them, shall they be withheld. It would be to very little purpose I am convinced, to remind you of your professions upon that shocking occasion—how you disclaimed the sacrifice, the—but I have done, and will abide by your determination—as I foresee it is the only means of securing that worthy, unfortunate, young gentleman, from farther violence—and henceforth—her sweet mouth, Arthur was a little convulsed

vulsed from the stubbornness of her heart
—I will be only yours.

I kissed her hand, and played a thousand rapturous pranks which I was unable to restrain : nor did I once resent (tho' I sensibly felt the ungracious stroke) her bold acknowledgment, that it was for the parson's sake alone she consented to be mine.

One thing however, my Lord, resumed she, I have to premise—I will not abruptly break off with my unhappy friend—he shall be settled in the country—weaned from me by degrees—and I will endeavour, in the mean time, to detatch my affections as much as possible from him—to save myself from the most horrid of perjuries.

What can she mean, Johnson—are then all your convenient, your interested matches preceded by so foul an action?—I will read the ceremony over to-morrow-morning, and make myself thoroughly acquainted with the nature of the engage-

ment—but this, dear creature, has most singular notions of integrity and honour. And so she had need, my friend, when I can resolve to marry her, even without her own consent—but I cannot help flattering myself, that so violent a passion, on my part, must meet with a decent return; when once it becomes her duty, you know—there can be no doubt about it.

I have obtained leave to repeat my visit so soon as I please, and we are to concert the most plausible measures for reconciling Leicester to our future views and intentions.

How much I am indebted to you, can never be expressed—you have given me more than life, consequently my warmest friendship will be ever,

Yours,

CLERAGE.

LETTER

LETTER VII.

Miss LE FEVER to Miss WINTER.

DID I not mention to you, my dear Polly, on some former occasion, that I was not of the number of those, who conceive themselves marked out by providence for peculiar wretchedness—but alas! that confidence has nearly forsaken me—I am not in any degree equal to the trials I am called to sustain, and, without supernatural assistance, must sink under them.

I concluded my last letter in the frenzy of despair: but it was not even then, at its utmost height; for, would you believe it, all mild and timid as I am by nature—I flew to the well known author of my misery, and offered to sacrifice myself for Leicester's redemption.

That villainy and humanity can exist in the same bosom—but, however great the seeming contradiction, in Lord Clerage's

case, at that period it was most incontestibly evident. My appearance struck him with horror, and my language searched him into contrition.

He for some time used his artful endeavours to console me, without making the concession my heart was set upon—but finding all he said only aggravated my sufferings, he was at last so intirely overcome, that he gave me the strongest assurances, that my wishes should be accomplished, and has actually been indefatigable in effecting this humane engagement.

But by relieving me on the one hand, he has destroyed me on the other.

His goodness, his mercy, his benevolence, my Dear, are merely transient: and as he no longer beholds me in the deplorable agonies that shook his daring resolution—he already begins to deceive himself with the preposterous expectation, that absence will wear out the favourable impressions

pressions I have received of Mr. Leicester's merit.

On this fatal presumption, on this absurd hope, or more properly from the irrestrainableness of his own disposition, which he miscalls love—he has had the meanness, the cruelty, to wave his own generous professions, and demand the performance of mine—that were alone extorted by misery and anguish.

But I will be resigned—bitter and grievous as the compliance will prove to my soul, I am resolved to carry it into execution—it is the only method, my dear Polly, (tho' you must confess a very desperate one,) to preserve the man I love from injustice and persecution. By this exalted stroke of female heroism, (for such you must allow me to call it,) my poor mother's circumstances will be rendered easy, Lady Catherine's fickle friendship restored—your Le Fever's head adorned with jewels, her steps furrounded with magnificence—and whilst all these

externals flatter her beholding friends—may they never have one sad idea of the wretchedness that will corrode her miserable heart.

His want of delicacy, his breach of generosity, almost distracts me—is there in nature such horrid selfishness—can any human being exult in the possession of the mere covering of a broken and dejected spirit? Mr. Leicester—how will he support the no less unexpected than unjustifiable treatment? I shall see him once more, however—and we will look no further at present—the prospect is abundantly too dreadful to be dwelt upon.

Neither my mother, nor Mrs. Leeson, have the most distant apprehension of his Lordship's villainy—nor durst I venture to give them any intimation of it, for fear of incurring the suspicion of vanity and ingratitude, so that he will at this day have the merit with them, of being his great and noble deliverer. And as things are likely to take the melancholy turn,
I have

I have described, it will be most prudent for me to remain for ever silent, respecting the whole transaction.

Is there no way of escaping this last, this greatest evil?

I have just communicated the good news, *this Lord* has brought me with regard to poor Mr. Leicester, to my best friends. They congratulated me with the utmost warmth—professed to participate my returning happiness, and I was obliged to sink my depression deep, to elude their penetration. They perfectly defied this strange man of quality for his humanity, his disinterestedness, his greatness of soul—for was it not a rival, an approved as successful rival, that he had been the instrument of restoring, to the utter exclusion of himself and every shadow of hope—but the felicity of the woman he loved, was apparently much dearer to him than his own.

Specious, barbarous, irresolute mortal—can I deliver myself up—yet what is

the peace of a mere individual, to the convenience, the satisfaction of a multitude—my mother—the already too much injured Leicester, are deserving of the prodigious sacrifice, and I will not complain.

I must, my dear girl, (even while I confess that I believe you incapable of such cruel insult,) I must caution you never to mention the title, fortune, or other fatal acquisition I may obtain, with the smallest degree of approbation—they will be only so many stabs to my bleeding, suffering, heart—from their proving continual mementos of that calm, that blessed tranquillity, Leicester, and a bare competence would have given me.

I hope to see him to-morrow.—Adieu, my good girl—I fly the cruel recollection, that we are only to meet this once, to be for ever separated.

I am, &c.

C. LE FEVER.

LETTER

LETTER VIII.

*Lord CLERAGE to ARTHUR JOHNSON,
Esq;*

NOW, Johnson, I summons you to attend me to Hogsdon, to undo the infamous work you wrought there, in my service.

I did not leave town till the evening drew in. *Darkness is more eligible than light to those whose deeds are evil.* I know not what kind of journey you had of it, but, for my part, I never was engaged so unpleasant a one in my whole life: for, shall I acknowledge it, I was so little minded, as to shrink at even the bare idea of appearing before a man, whose wrongs were so clamorous against me: and for the honour of virtue I mention it, it was the consciousness that I had the grace to redress them, that alone supported me through the whole sad scene.

Never was highwayman more artfully disguised; at least as far as the draw-up cape of my great coat and flouched hat would admit; for I did not think it safe to strain any farther—so much for my dress—my conveyance was a hackney coach—and my attendances—the pleasing suggestions of a guilty conscience.

When arrived, I soon made a speech to the satisfaction of the keepers—silence and secrecy were my card—and the usual persuasives my method of proceeding. It was not long before I was conducted to the dismal apartment. Attend the description of the deplorable condition, to which you and I wantonly reduced an unoffending fellow-creature; and if ever you undertake a friendly office again, have the humanity to suffer the unhappy object of your displeasure, to put a period to an existence, which, in the place I have so recently visited, is beyond expression a curse, if accompanied with common sensibility.

sibility. Thus the best institutions may be perverted to the vilest purposes.

An ill-looking fellow, with a miserable taper, was my gentleman usher to a room that had a gloomy appearance, which was unspeakably heightened by the object it contained.

Pale, faint, and with every token of the bitterest despair, lay the poor suffering Leicester—stretched out at his length on an old dirty mattress—his feet were fastened down with cords, and his hands strongly fettered.

His fixed features underwent not the least change on my approach—intirely hopeless what was worth his observation.

Sir, said I, with all the tender pity that was due to his condition, you must not be surprised to find a friend in your extremity.—I know your story, and have received authority on one concession to restore you to all you hold dear.

It is too late, replied he in a weak, low, voice—my faculties are all exhausted—

not even hope remains—therefore credulity is needless.

I am forry, Sir, said I, to find you so insensible to what I conceived would have been glad tidings—who in your situation would not eagerly extricate themselves; especially, if their safety and liberty were of the same importance to the most lovely woman on earth?

Ah! cried he wildly—but the gloomy steadiness instantly returning—it is impossible, added he—and yet pausing a few moments—you seem to mean me, well——do you know any thing of miss Le Fever? does she?

It is by a friend of hers, said I, that I am sent; it is by a friend of hers that I am employed.

He endeavoured to jump up at this information, but the cruel cords made him soon repent his raptures—I cut them in pieces—and relieved him from that bondage that I shuddered only to behold.

Compose

Compose yourself, Sir, said I, and encourage every happy expectation, miss Le Fever will rejoice to see you.

He darted his ghastly eyes upon me—I was obliged to repeat the flattering assurance, and as belief began to steal upon his heart, his features assumed a more placid cast.— But, Sir, resumed I, there is one condition that I am bound to propose.

Make your own terms, cried he, every thing but Miss Le Fever, (what will become of me, Johnson?) who is infinitely dearer to me than life itself, shall be yours.

It is not to be expected, returned I, that you should not feel the utmost horror and resentment at the treatment you have sustained. But can you accept of the services I mean to render you as a full compensation: and whilst you bless your deliverer, forbear to complain of your betrayer: I have reasons for this request.

You have most effectually secured him, said the too charitable sufferer, by your
humanity

humanity and goodness, from all accusation : and I now bind myself, by the most sacred ties, never to divulge one circumstance of his unaccountable cruelty to a being that never injured any one.

He is indeed, Arthur, an *Israelite*, and appears to be free from all *guile*—nor would my soul refuse acquaintance with him, if he was any other than the lover of my Le Fever.

We returned to London. Our conversation on the road was such as might be expected—he is very happy in his expressions, tho', at present, a kind of horrid spectacle to the sight. I set him down at the house I had prepared for his reception, and I have great reason to believe he has too confused an idea of all that has happened to him, ever to be able to put it together, if he was ever so maliciously disposed—for he neither knows the part of the town he was carried from, nor the one he was set down at this night—so let
the

the black transaction sink into total oblivion.

I shall pay my personal compliments to him in the morning, in the new character of Mrs. Leeson's friend, and will do every thing but *one* to make him happy—if he has not actually lost his senses, can I have much to fear? I shall sleep better this night than many preceding ones, and let what will be the consequence, neither you nor I ought to regret the justice we have done the injured and unhappy.

I am, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER IX.

From the Same to the Same.

MY visit, Mr. Johnson, is paid, and I would advise you to prosecute your travelling scheme: you and I are not so well calculated, as we imagined, for

for everlasting friends. All is at an end with me, I am not so accomplished a devil as I even believed myself to be—I have made the sacrifice—the last conflict is over—and Hendon shall receive me to solitude—and, if possible, tranquillity.

But that you may not conclude it was a small matter that subdued me; nor have it in your power to complain, that I broke hands with you abruptly, I will give you the particulars of yesterday at large.

I found the young fellow very little improved in his looks—wild and meagre, his very aspect terrified me, nor could I support the recollection of the scene I had been witness to the day before, without infinite confusion.

Are you, Sir, said he, Mrs. Leeson's friend, that I was taught to expect would call upon me; and will you convey me to my dear Miss Le Fever? Has she not been affected by my absence, will not my return be grateful to her?—My head is rather

ther weak—recollection is painful to me—but I shall recover by her conversation, and revive by her tendernefs.

You fhall take a chair, Sir, faid I, and I will go before and prepare Mifs Le Fever for your arrival. I accordingly hurried away to Mrs. Leefon's, and begged to fpeak once more with the young Lady in private.

She appeared.

I informed her, Leicefter was on his way to Mount-ftreet, and befought her to conduct herfelf with her ufual refolution.

She trembled—fhe was greatly agitated. You will be prefent, Sir, faid fhe—I have given you a right to request what I thus voluntarily offer—our private meetings muft now terminate for ever.

O! how was my foolifh, fond, believing heart tranfported by this unexpected piece of condefcention—but before I could reply—Leicefter was at the door.

It was torture, it was diftraction—but could not be avoided—he retained her
hand

hand after the most tender and affectionate embrace, all which I was a *happy* witness to.

I am now completely satisfied, cried he, and let the memory of what is past perish for ever. The ruffians that betrayed me, managed very dexterously; for if I was disposed to proclaim my wrongs, (there is comfort for us culprits) I should be utterly unable to fix them—but it was the condition on which I obtained my deliverance, never to complain; and as I have been so short a time absent, and my connexions in London so limited, it will be no difficult matter to hush up the whole affair.

I hope, Sir, said Miss Le Fever, that your sufferings are all at an end—that gentleman has a proposal to make to you, that cannot but be agreeable.

The living was then brought upon the carpet—he was perfectly transported.

O! Sir, exclaimed he—what unhopèd for felicity have you conferred upon me—

You,

You, Madam, will not surely refuse to augment, to participate the blessing. If you ever entertained a favourable opinion of me, if you ever intended to honour me with your hand, do not now withhold it—help me, Sir, assist me with your generous eloquence to obtain this greatest, this most essential of points, and never was there a being more completely happy, than I should be rendered.

This, you are sensible, must be a very delightful turn and request to me.

Miss Le Fever's countenance was instantly over-spread with the deepest anguish; and she was seized with a strong and most alarming fit, I think they call it convulsive.

Leicester, the horrid looking, the officious Leicester, held her in his arms—I fetched in Mrs. Stubbs—Jenny happened very fortunately to be below—and we all at length, with great difficulty, brought her to herself.

She

She desired Leicester, so soon as she was somewhat recovered, to go up to her mother and Mrs. Leeson, as they wanted much to see him, promising to follow in a short time; but charged him on no consideration to alarm them with the mention of her disorder.

The moment Leicester retired, she intreated to speak with me alone.

My Lord, said she, I find I have entered into an engagement, I am unable to perform—you have beheld the dreadful effects of constraint upon my constitution, and I would die in silence, if I had not the tenderest of mothers to claim my attention. Let me beseech you, Sir, before it is too late, to consider what misery, what wretchedness, you would be the author of, by persisting in your present purpose. My early death, (which would infallibly be the case,) would be the least part of what you would have to answer for.—My mother, Mr. Leicester, would not their unmerited sufferings be duly punished.

punished. I behold you at present with horror and detestation; I cannot conquer them, nor shall the acknowledgment be any longer suppressed; but you have it in your power to intitle your self to my thanks, my gratitude, my best approbation. Only spare my person, and your Lordship shall be master of my every action: I will never marry the poor unfortunate Mr. Leicester—I will never take one step without your sanction and direction—it is my own life, my dear mother's—and—I will not name him to offend you.—Will you not then be merciful?—Can you, my Lord, resist your own natural humanity, and the earnest solicitations of a woman you profess to love.

Live, live, my beloved Miss Le Fever, cried I, with the tenderest emphasis, live and be happy. I now absolve you from every hateful tie. The temporary living shall be Mr. Leicester's—and do you fulfill (it stuck in my throat notwithstanding all my contrition,) his utmost

most desire—you shall never more receive any interruption from me. So saying, I hurried out of the house, lest I should again relapse into my odious extravagance.

And now, Mr. Johnson, I leave you to judge, if all correspondence between you and me must not terminate. I cannot brook raillery, and you are incapable of beholding my conduct in any other than a ridiculous light.

The remittances I promised you shall be duly made—it is from principle, not cowardice, that I forbear to reproach you with what is past—may we both live to repent—that tho', disunited here, we may meet each other, and my sweet, lovely Le Fever in that futurity, where crimes and criminals can have no place.

I fancy I have given you enough of the unfortunate

CLERAGE.

LETTER

LETTER X.

Lord CLERAGE to Sir GEORGE HENDON.

St. ALBANS.

NOW, now, my worthy Hendon, you may rely upon seeing me—every thing is as you could wish—the conflict over, and London beyond my utmost view.

I have taken my leave, perhaps for ever, of every vain pursuit: I have bid adieu to the pleasures of gaiety, and the delights of revelling: I have washed my hands of iniquity: I have torn myself from the spot I doated upon:—I have resigned such hopes:—I have fore-gone such expectations—but what is it I have not left behind me, except the curse of consciousness, and the racks of sensibility. Well, well, am I not in the high road to Dunstable, and shall I not proceed from thence to Sir George Hendon's?—Does not the most friendly reception—the most humane attention, and every rational amusement, await

await me? Lady Hendon—but my wounds will bleed afresh when I behold her—her sex, her perfections—the domestic happiness she communicates, are very unfit encounters for a man in my circumstances. I must have an apartment, my friend, that will seclude me from every female—and you, and you only, will be my welcome visitant.

Yet I am determined if possible to tear her lovely image from my heart—I will enjoy the beauty, the innocence of your rural world; and be the Damon and Corydon of the village.

And can I then forget the Abbey adventurer—there, alas, is the rock on which my miserable peace will be perpetually splitting. What a countenance—how justly and strongly was the soul depicted in each glowing feature. Yet what a contemptible wretch, to be whining for the only woman, perhaps, that would have disdained my addresses. Am I not young? Do I not possess uncommon advantages,

vantages, fortune, title, vivacity; and we will look about us, Hendon, and not only divert, but dispel this troublesome passion. Has not the gentle Romeo frequently excited our mirth? the dying Vazanees our ridicule? and shall we not rally our modern Enamorato out of his languishments?

That there has been puppies in every century, is evident, no less from the lightest, than the soberest page. The witchcraft of love, was not at all times resistible, even with heroes, senators, and great philosophers—and yet I am very much inclined to believe, that none of your ladies, in ancient story, ever equalled my Le Fever.

And are all her incomparable perfections to be bestowed upon?—

A distempered mind is a much worse disease, than a distempered brain—harsh and severe discipline will relieve the one, but enflames the other.

How shall we amuse ourselves—your lady, I am told, is a rational being, and promotes her husband's pleasure, tho' unconnected with her own. We will ramble to the utmost verge of your estate—smoke with the parson, and drink with the hind.

I must, now I recollect myself, inform lady Catharine of our common misfortune—misfortune did I say—how absurd the comparison—she, George, has only lost the gratification of pride—whilst I—

I rejoice to think I am so far on my way to your happy mansion—the town, the town is become a howling wilderness in my imagination—I have flown—but to what purpose—from the shaft of despair, and the sting of undying love.

I have many things to tell you, that will astonish you—my transgressions have been great—but my repentance, my conquest—

My chaise is at the door—we will read this wild epistle (for I fancy I shall reach
you

you pretty much at the same time,) in one of your most gloomy shades—I am incapable of remembering either what I ought to write, or have written, except that I am

&c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER XI.

Miss LE FEVER to Miss WINTER.

* **T**HUS have I told you every particular, my dear Polly, of the happy turn in my affairs. And I have only to add, that Mr. Leicester is now in actual possession of his temporary cure—and has great reason to hope it will be rendered a permanent one.

My Lord's generosity has enabled him to be very importunate upon the subject

* Mere repetition of letters, for which reason it is suppressed.

D 2.

I hinted

I hinted to you; my mother and Mrs. Leeson are entirely in his interest, and what may be the consequence, is impossible for me to say.

I own, I think it would have a singular, if not an absolute, encouraging appearance with respect to Lord Clerage, if I was to decline an union, I have been so bold as to acknowledge, my heart and soul to be set upon, when he himself has so strongly recommended it. But it is an awful change, and was very foreign to my present intention—Mr. Leicester has, however, suffered so exceedingly upon my account, that I owe him every recompence—my mind is so agitated, that you must excuse my saying any more—except to caution you not to be surpris'd, if the next news you receive, is, that I am no longer Kitty Le Fever, tho' as perfectly as ever

Your's, &c.

C. L E F E V E R.

LETTER

LETTER XII.

From the Same to the Same.

BRICKLEY.

YOUR congratulations, my dear girl, were highly grateful to me. My spirits were so discomposed by the important change in my condition, that my mother kindly offered her service to make you acquainted with it *.

Our parting with the worthy Mrs. Lee-son and Mrs. Stubbs, sat heavy upon my heart for some time; but the smiling satisfaction that shone forth in my mother's aspect, so much superior to all I could have expected, gradually harmonised my soul, and communicated the most flattering and delightful of hopes. She is desirous, I do assure you, of an opportunity of presenting her new and approved relation, to his old friend Miss Winter; I therefore intreat you will let us see you

* Neither of which letters are inserted.

as soon as possible, and that in the mean time, you will be abundantly careful of yourself for our sakes.

Your father's disorder may continue for many months; to leave him, I own would be unnatural; but should any change take place, you surely would not think of living at such a cruel distance from us.

Our habitation is large and commodious—and its situation to the last degree unexceptionable. My mother is naturally chearful—my husband's disposition you are no stranger to; and when you add your sincere friend to the company, can you not conceive, that we might derive unspeakable felicity from our union. I will not, however, enter into a description of the conveniency and advantages we are possessed of, lest you should be tempted to call my veracity in question; to exaggerate beauties, and aggravate deformities, is no uncommon practice, where interest or prejudice governs the

the pen; you shall visit us, my girl, and judge for yourself.

Sometimes, indeed, when I look forward to the precariousness of our present possessions, I am shocked and alarmed. But Mrs. Leeson assures us of our safety in such positive terms, that Mr. Leicester and my mother are entirely undoubting.

It is plain, my Polly, that this Lord Clerage is capable of both cruelty and injustice, yet we must nevertheless acknowledge, that he is no stranger to generosity and humanity; great were the evils he brought upon us, but has he not made us all possible recompence.

I own, when I reflect upon Lady Catharine's conduct, his Lordship's loses a large portion of its enormity in my estimation. He had a gratification to obtain—her Ladyship's rigor and inflexibility—what could they proceed from?

Did she not consign me to danger and suffering, upon the slightest offence—

her sex alone might have taught her a more tender lesson. Had I renounced her protection for Mr. Leicester's sake; had I proved ungrateful, or presuming upon her indulgence, I should have acquitted her of all blame—but I only sought to relieve the misery of so near and dear a relation, as not to have loved, compassionated, and assisted, would have betrayed me, unworthy even of life itself, and devoid of all sensibility.

This was my transgression, and you are well acquainted with my punishment: yet this very woman so outrageous, so merciless in her resentment, could, from pride, offer to bestow upon this highly offending object, seven thousand pounds to recommend her to nobility. Yes, seven thousand pounds were ready to intitle her to a superfluous settlement; but not one farthing to have preserved her from vice or penury.

It is all past, however, and should be forgotten; but the too retentive and feeling

ing soul will not always rest—and there are hours, in which the cruel scene of being driven out by her Ladyship, suggests itself so strongly to my imagination, that I am unable to restrain all those passions, it first gave rise to.

What providence means to do with us, is an anxious, tho' presumptuous enquiry; I am sensible every situation has its uncertainty, but the loss of our provision is not only a very possible, but a very probable contingency. I know my own strength of mind, but have reason to apprehend, that poor Mr. Leicester is not altogether so well suited to the exercise of adversity—and what pangs should I endure upon his, and my dear mother's account.—O Polly come, and save me from these embittering reflections.

This is rather an uncommon stile for a bride—a happy bride, as I may most justly call myself; but there is such a mixture of good and evil, of joy and grief,

in my destiny, that I know not which ought to be most predominant.

Lord Clerage left London, they tell me, in great discontent, (these young gentlemen—how ill they broke the slightest disappointment,) and professes to suffer much more for my sake, than I flatter myself is literally true. May he find that felicity in his future connexions, he has had the justice to bestow on me.

Mrs. Leeson has made me a present of a handsome piece of plate, and promises to favour us with her company in the country, if she lives till next summer—a very precarious dependance at her time of life—tho' indeed, it is the case with respect to all human dependances, except where the heart and affections are as strongly united, as are those of my dear Polly's and her,

&c.

C. LEICESTER.

N.B. This letter is succeeded by an abridgment of a whole two years correspondence,

dence, as by the little variety and uninterestingness of the subjects, the reader would have derived but small entertainment from its publication.

LETTER XIII.

Lord CLERAGE to Sir GEORGE HENDON.

Forgive me, my ever valuable George, and you, my obliging Lady Hendon, that I have made so unworthy a return for all your kindness, as to elope from your indulgent and hospitable roof; madly to launch a second time on that great ocean, the world.

Had I followed the dictates either of right reason, or your friendly advise, I am sensible I should still have shunned the dangerous encounter; but let your apprehensions, your tender concern for me, wholly subside, and be assured I am utterly unworthy both of the one and the other.

I will tear off the mask, for it is become beyond measure intolerable, and disclose some blameable particulars which I have had the mean artifice, even in my hours of confession, to conceal from your knowledge.

You may remember, that when my disappointments drove me from London, I sent you word from St. Alban's, that I intended to make your house my happy assylum.

At that period, Sir George, I rather deceived myself, than you: it was my intention, it was my resolution—but I had no sooner dispatched my unmeaning, incoherent letter, than all the fury I had so long endeavoured to suppress, burst forth, and I became but one remove from an absolute lunatic.

What have I done, cried I, abandoned my last, my dearest hopes—it cannot be—I will indeed, never more call in a villain to my assistance—but I cannot leave her so abruptly. I will disguise myself—I will

will watch all their motions—shall I patiently endure the racks and tortures of a wounded spirit, whilst they are revelling in the excess of felicity. No, this head of hair (viewing myself in the glass,) shall no longer distinguish me from the most sober race of mortals—a wig will favour my wishes, consequently is a most desirable acquisition.

I immediately sought out a miserable barber—underwent the operation—purchased a little demure bob—and without the least precaution to prevent my taking cold, returned in a few hours to London.

I wrote to you with dissembled composure; in order to amuse you with a notion, that I had called at Clark's, (our old school-fellow,) and told you, I would be with you within the fortnight.

I had formed a variety of schemes, to introduce myself at Mrs. Leeson's, nor do I know what mischief I might have effected, if I had been permitted to carry any one of them into execution. But the
loss

loss of my hair gave me so severe a cold, that I verily believed I should have lost my eyes—it, however, soon shewed itself to be a St. Anthony's fire, and settled on one side of my face.

When I found it necessary to put myself under the care of some experienced person, I sent for Dr. Broadwater, with whom I recollected your worthy and sedate countryman, Freeman, was then a pupil.

He gave me good attention, treated my disorder judiciously, but the redness on my cheek did not wear off for some time after I arrived at your seat—I forget what false reason I then assigned for it.

I gave myself to the doctor for a decent private man, of some little property; and contrived to have frequent conversations on various subjects with Freeman, in the course of which I discovered, that he was possessed of every requisite for my purpose.

I, at

I, at length, took an opportunity of enquiring into his circumstances, and found them limited and unpromising to my heart's content. For he had no view, beyond engaging himself as an assistant to some one of the faculty in the army or navy. I cast about for many days, yet was unable to hit upon any plausible method of rendering him serviceable to me—when it struck my whimsical fancy, that to fix him at Brickley, in his own profession of an apothecary, might be a lucky article.

I would gladly have given myself to him as a partner, and, let me tell you, many partnerships have been patched up on no better foundation—I the money, he the skill, but was afraid of detection. Nor is there a more convenient character under the sun, for running in and out a house unquestioned, than the physician, surgeon, or apothecary. The first, I was most sensible, was a stroke or two too high for Brickley, and the second no less

less superior to the abilities I was master of; for to assume a consequential look, and set a broken bone, is not equally practicable.

The humble apothecary was a sphere, I think, I should have ventured to have moved in, if my knowledge of your country customs, had not convinced me of the necessity of uniting the several branches, when at a distance from the metropolis. I therefore wisely determined he should embark alone, and that I would visit him at some future period, as a friend, boarder, or whatever would wear the best face of probability.

I accordingly observed to him one day, what a pity it was, he should leave England; and, as if by accident, described the many advantages that would accrue from his settling in some little town—and having mentioned two or three places, with the address you know I am capable of, dwelt boldly upon Brickley, as the most eligible—offered to be his friend—
and

and sent him down at my own expence to reconnoitre.

Every thing succeeded to my wish—a reputable person of the faculty was greatly wanted, as the man who at that period, from necessity was their every thing, was little better than a horse doctor.

I advanced him five hundred pounds upon his own bond—a house was taken—the modest furniture soon conveyed into their respective places, and Freeman, with a most grateful and honest heart, strutting behind his counter.

As the fellow I have just mentioned, was the only apothecary within several miles of Brickley, he was pleased to add, to his other perfections, all that insolent, low consequence, such a circumstance naturally communicates to your narrow souls—so that you find our Freeman set off with a very favourable prospect—nor did I scruple to pronounce, that if his soft address, agreeable person, tender application, and indefatigable industry, failed

ed to recommend and establish him, (supported, as I resolved he should be by me, in that essential particular, money) he must be the most unfortunate of beings.

When this matter was perfectly accomplished, I arrived at your seat, where I must acknowledge, I have with difficulty detained myself, (notwithstanding the goodness of both Lady Hendon and yourself,) for two whole years, during which time, Freeman and I have been constant correspondents.

He informed me of repeated additions to Mrs. Leicester's family, a boy and girl; that Mrs. Leeson had stood in person to the former, (who it seems is my name-fake) to the latter by proxy only.

He has been successful even beyond my utmost expectations; for within these six weeks, Miss Winter, (the Lady whose letter I intercepted, and sent my base engine a copy of, at the breaking out of my disappointments, and who, upon the death

death of an old cross father, came to reside intirely with her friend, Mrs. Leicester,) has thought proper to bestow her hand upon him, with a fortune of nine thousand pounds.

The small sum I lent him, has been repaid with the utmost gratitude, and I have received repeated invitations, both from himself and wife, (by the name of Clayton, and the direction of the letter being left at your post-house till called for,) to favour them with my company—an invitation, I have had the grace, till within these few days, to decline.

But what is now become of all my resolution—and have I at last most fatally retracted my renunciation of this charming woman? I have, George, heard such particulars, as must justify the flame that has been awakened in my soul, and plead my excuse for every future proceeding.

You must allow, Sir George Hendon, that if Miss Le Fever was under no obligations

gations to me, I was not in any degree obliged to Miss Le Fever; but what can be said for a wretch—who having received the most precious of gifts—can be unkind to the giver—and entertain the grossest suspicions of her, that is little inferior to the angels themselves, in purity and virtue.

Why, why would this reptile teach such a wife an evil lesson against himself—and will she not attend to it—she indeed spurned me, when I offered to raise her to the highest dignities—but may she not be roused by ill treatment, to make me the instrument of her revenge—it is at least worth the experiment, and shall be carried into execution.

Have patience with me, my friend, and do not compel me to seek a less worthy confidant—I will write you every thought of my heart, however odious or reprobable, and submit to your chastisement without complaint. Be satisfied that baseness,

ness, that guilt dwells only on my pen, so long as I continue to correspond with you. Accept this as my final apology, and allow me to rattle on in the language of a knave, to secure me an honest man.

A beautiful dejection, as Freeman expresses himself, is visible in her aspect, which his wife assures him is wholly owing to little unaccountable flights and mean insults, he is frequently prone to commit; tho' he has the address to confine them to their private hours, and she has too nice a sense of duty to reveal—was this poison to be resisted—it run through my veins—and you have been witness to its effects in the first instance.

Upon this slight foundation alone, am I once more become a rambler, and in order the more effectually to conceal myself, I intend to stain that side of my face that was affected by my distemper, and assume the humble bob wig in which I appeared, when Freeman was personally acquainted with me. These articles, together

gether with the heavy langour my eyes have contracted, my sharpened features and common absences of thought, cannot fail to give me the air of a man of close speculation, and I may bid defiance to detection.

I do suppose my schemes will not meet with your approbation. Domesticated by an irresistible charm, and confirmed in every worthy principle, by being out of the reach of temptation, you look upon it as the easiest thing in life, to walk soberly and righteously; but believe me, my happy friend, that had you been exercised in the disappointments that have fallen to my lot, you would have found your heart beyond measure refractory.

Have you not the same degree of fire in your temper as myself? have you not an equal share of vanity, and is not your ambition quite as unbounded—but you, indeed, direct your spirit to innocent and profitable pursuits—you are vain only in maintaining due power over your own inclina-

inclinations, and ambitious where the cause is virtue.

I feel, I acknowledge myself the frailest and most whimsical of beings, I can enter into all your rational, your benevolent gratifications; I esteem, nay wish, to emulate your prudence, your moderation—but there is a restless something which informs my breast, that is superior to the convictions of sense, and the admonitions of reason—it will—it must be obeyed—mix pity, therefore, with condemnation; and whilst you despise the action, gently censure the man.

You mentioned something to me once concerning education—it has been the bane of many such wretches as myself. I never was taught the necessity of self-denial, nor heard the least mention of the advantages of patience and resignation. No one was so gracious, as to prepare *me* to encounter mortification or difficulties, no more than if they had not had existence—yet you find I have been called
to

to the practical knowledge of those most trying evils; and my disqualification to sustain them, has occasioned all the errors and iniquities I have been guilty of.

May your life continue as serene as your conduct is justifiable; may your soft, your endearing companion be incapable of deviating from the excellent rules she has hitherto observed—and may neither of you ever know the misery and wild confusion (tho' but for a moment,) that the loss of a beloved object can produce, where there is strong susceptibility.

I am, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER XIV.

Sir GEORGE HENDON *to* Lord CLERAGE.

O! Clerage, Clerage, will you, in one unlucky hour, undo all that two whole years seemed to have accomplished—

ed—will you again resume the trammel of vice, and submit your lately retrieved neck to the hateful yoke of base dissimulation. Return once more, my friend, to those scenes of peace and innocence, which you have so recently guided, and we will redouble our endeavours, to render them delightful to you—and reflect before the unavailing period reaches you—that the very tears of virtue, are of far greater value than the broadest mirth, that vicious pleasure has in store.

If I had never loved you, never had any other connexion with you, than during these last two years, your sudden departure, and unwarrantable purposes, would grieve and alarm me; judge then what I must now feel; when, after having had you restored to me, from the very ship-wreck of honour and integrity, to know you a second time plunged into the unfathomable deep.

My wife exceedingly laments the deception you have practised both upon us

and yourself; and intreats me to omit no one argument, to save you from yielding yourself a miserable slave, to the criminal dictates of the most groveling of passions.

Can you, my Lord, have so much of the brute about you, as to become a mere sensualist? Where is your pride?—What, have you no idea of the dignity the duties of a rational being?—Your form is erect, your intellectual faculties unimpaired: can you then descend to herd with the beasts of the field, that are incapable of the gratifications, for which you are so immediately calculated?

But much offended animals, I feel, I confess, the injustice of the comparison—you uniformly pursue the walk assigned ye—the voice of instinct ought to be obeyed—you have no appetites that are unlawful, no desires that are unjustifiable—yet when this *thing*, that calls himself your Lord, abuses the endowments he possesses, and becomes resolved to re-
nounce

nounce his glorious hopes of a happy immortality; when the checks of conscience, and the stings of reflection, are insufficient to restrain him from the grossest of excesses—we then proclaim him brutal, when we should stile him infernal.

You fancy that love for Mrs. Leicester incites you to throw yourself again in her way; but you are exceedingly deceived—it is revenge.

You was refused by her, when your purposes were what you called honourable, (tho' she was even then engaged to her present husband,) from a humility, an integrity that few females have equalled. You cannot, you have not, my Lord, digested the mortifying stroke.

But how comes it, that her choice might not be as voluntary as yours?

Your designs were of the basest nature, on your first acquaintance with her—her virtue was too pure for your corrupt sight—it gave her too great superiority

over you—and her reduction to a suitable standard, to your own, the grand point you had in view. You soon, however, discovered the folly of your attempt; Captain Le Fever's bravery was perpetuated in his daughter's chastity, and you was reduced to the necessity of assuming, at least, the face of that propriety she so evidently loved.

You still failed of success—she had met with a young fellow, that possessed the requisite qualifications to recommend himself to her approbation—and him she accepted.

I will spare you the recollection of an action, that repentance had almost obliterated.—She married him—from too great sensibility the much favoured husband is betrayed into error—all excesses are productive of mortification and uneasiness—and none more acute or hard to sustain, than from excess of love. But Mrs. Leicester has too much discernment
to

to mistake the cause, and too much candour not to excuse and pity the effect.

Her mother's mild affection—her infant's smiling innocence will make her the utmost amends for the unfortunate tenderness of her husband—and as every being must have difficulties to cope with, perhaps none would be more light or eligible to her, than what she is called to encounter.

Yet you, my Lord, on another foundation, than hearing that her husband is not (what no mortal ever was, and you yourself, you must be sensible, are very foreign to) perfection; you are setting out in order, if possible, to work that into misery and wretchedness, that is at present only a trifling allay.

Forego the base, the cruel design, and let good a second time result from evil, by leaving the worthy Freeman, to enjoy the felicity he has derived from your schemes.

It is needless to trouble you to read, or my self to write, any further dissuatives; for if what I have already offered are insufficient to warn you of your danger, or induce you to make a timely retreat, you must take the consequence of your obduracy, and I must remain your unhappy.

Yours,

G. HENDON.

L E T T E R X V.

Lord CLERAGE to Sir GEORGE HENDON.

HOW can you, my worthy George, prevail upon yourself to write in such harsh and grating terms, to so miserable a wretch, as you are sensible, Clerage has long been. Am I not subdued by disappointment? Does not the hand of mortification sufficiently depress me, that

that you thus unite your endeavours to crush me to the dust?

My journey to Brickley will, in all probability, prove no other than an innocent amusement—I must see her—I must be an eye-witness of the treatment she sustains, but her peace shall not in any degree be interrupted, or her reputation ever so slightly wounded.

I believe, I subscribe to the justice, the truth of all your arguments—but whatever doubts you may entertain of my principles, you can have none of hers—I am no ruffian myself, nor shall any consideration incite me to employ a second in my service, and for compliance—was she not Miss Le Fever. If indulging myself with a little conversation with her—if beholding her lovely face, or breathing the same air—can lessen the weight of what I endure,—O! Hendon, why would you prevent it?

I have most faithfully painted her character, in the course of our correspondence.

dence. Was she not immoveable in poverty, constant in love, and irresistibly pathetic in calamity? Did not the anguish of her countenance, the energy of her language, warp me from my most determined purpose, even when I had a bad genius, to spirit me on to the final accomplishment of it?—What then may you not rely upon, when all my thoughts shall be communicated for correction—every action submitted to your censure.

I commenced villain, it is true, most daringly commenced it—but shew me the man that would have so soon retracted—I am evidently too much in her power for her ever to be in mine, and I only catch at the most extravagant and preposterous of hopes, to snatch myself for a moment from the depths of despair; but shall I confess the undisguised truth to you, Sir George—I have a pride, an unspeakable satisfaction in this woman's virtue—and it will be for the honour of
her

her sex, as well as the tranquility of my poor soul, that I should be convinced she is equal to every trial. The bare insinuation, the half formed shadow of error or impropriety in that nature, that I have so long persuaded myself, is the purest that ever dwelt on earth—is beyond measure insupportable—and I must have an opportunity of viewing her in every new light in which she may be placed. The suspected wife, the mother—they afford a large field of observation and action, and I shall forget my own cares in my attention, my concern for hers. Weigh well what I have now wrote in the honest simplicity of my heart—and condemn me if you can.

Consent, therefore, to let me write to you—vouchsafe to be privy to my transactions, and if I do not acquit myself as much to your good liking on this as some former occasions—then pour forth your most stabbing reproaches, and finish

an existence, that under such circumstances would be odious, even to its professor.

I could not forbear making Mrs. Lesson a visit; it would have been both cruel and ungrateful to have neglected her, when within my reach. Though it will not be in my power to contribute much (as my stay in London will be so short,) to enliven, what age must have rendered tedious—the gloomy hours; yet this worthy creature, just on the verge of the grave, has a thousand resources in herself, that I shall never attain—true goodness of heart, my friend, is a support that never fails.

Our meeting was both tender and agreeable. The faithful Jenny, was ready to cry for joy at my return—how many fond and tormenting ideas was revived in my breast—but as I was impatient to proceed to Brickley, I soon took my leave, under pretence of urgent business that had called me through town, but would not permit me to continue in it.

Perhaps

Perhaps I may be so much delighted with the joys of friendship, and the innocence of a country life in this my new expedition, as to be unwilling to renounce them. I shall affect great reserve—my visits at the parson's must not be frequent, nor of long duration—but as a rich cordial, a supporting, a reviving cordial, tasted with judgment and moderation.

The little boy—what, Leicester's boy? No, my Le Fever's—had they called him Le Fever, my whole soul should have been devoted to him—but if he has his mother's features, can my attachment be withheld?

I forgot to mention, that Mrs. Lee-son, in the few moments we were together, did not fail to recommend the interest of this family to my peculiar care and consideration, and that in such strong terms, that I resolved to have an immediate interview with young Wed-bore, respecting the living. I found, on conversing with him, that he had a turn

for a court chaife, rather than the church, and therefore introduced him to his grace, of—my particular friend, who has promised to provide for him agreeable to his wishes, and the living is to be Leicester's for life.

I shall not, however, communicate the good news too abruptly, but examine both the husband and wife's conduct, before I set them at the height of their wishes—if he is a barbarous wretch, and she has any gratitude—never bounce, George, you cannot seriously apprehend either the one, or the other.

I should have avoided all the iniquity and sufferings this sweet girl has occasioned me, if it had not been your fault—you are surpris'd—but, thus I make it appear.

Invite a man down into the country, when you are convinced he is incapable of quitting London—was that the time, Hendon—no: you should have taken him
down

down with you, and then you would have been sure of him.

Did you not perceive the necessity there was for restraining my heedless steps, even before we left the Abbey? Had I not drank deep of the intoxication of beauty?—Did I not vow an indefatigable pursuit? And did you once exert yourself as you ought to have done, in dissuading me from that my declared resolution.

But you was yourself in love at that period—to have engaged my company, would have been in some degree, to interrupt your own happiness—recollect this article, and blush—blush, Sir George Hendon, at the double guilt of neglect and selfishness.

I shall leave London to-morrow morning—it is but one day's journey—and in the evening my eyes will behold—at least, the house.

You shall receive all the particulars—and should your curiosity at last be inferior to your honest rage, and you will
not

not deign to peruse them—it will be no affair of mine—and I shall rest perfectly satisfied in the consciousness, that I am acting agreeable to the character of

Your's, &c. reformed

CLERAGE.

LETTER XVI.

Mrs. FREEMAN to Miss GIBSON.

HOW aukward an undertaking, to inform my dear Penelope, that I am at length become the wife of honest Freeman—the murder is, however, happily out—and as we have actually been married these five weeks—we will let the wonder cease, and chat over the wedding with the same composure, as if it had happened months ago.

I had, without doubt, sufficiently explained myself upon the subject, to pre-
pare

pare you for the otherwise astonishing event—but it is the very purpose, my dear, for which we all so smartly look about us, and the final end of our creation.

My history, I hope you will allow, was very soon wound up, by my accepting the very first man that ever seriously asked me the question—but we girls of a common stamp, must not expect to have it in our power to cut the flourishes your beauties can.

To be sure, upon the whole, I am a very decentish figure—but it is not every male mortal, that might have made the discovery, and Freeman is the best-natured, grateful, obliging soul you ever met with.

A country apothecary, worth nine thousand pounds, I grant you is rather unusual—but then he has insisted upon securing so large a portion of it to my own use, that I verily think he deserves the rest—tho' he

he was even to lay it all out in fine painted gallipots.

No wife was ever more notable, than I intend to prove myself to be, (I have intirely left the fine Lady at the parson's,) knitting, spinning, and every species of industry, shall be carried on under my roof, as an example for my more idle and less fortunate neighbours. Your poorer order of gentry, who with the utmost straining and difficulty, can barely make both ends meet, as the phrase is, are ashamed of many acts of œconomy, as apprehending them to be tokens of meanness, or indication of poverty—but it shall be my endeavour to render propriety fashionable—and to teach these mis-judging females, that nothing is discommendable that is consistent with reason and probity; or a reflection upon the head, heart or circumstances, that is worthy to be performed.

It is astonishing to me, that the generality of the world should be so weak, as
to

to live rather in conformity to the humour of their acquaintance, than their own fortunes or inclinations. What would it be to me, if I was esteemed a degree or two less rich or valuable than I knew myself to be——should I not have the happy testimony of my own conscience——would not my family equally rejoice in my good management or industry, and reap the same benefit from my example, as if my excellences and perfections were founded upon the house-top.

I could say a vast deal more, quite as much to the purpose as what I have now presented you; but I suppose news instead of reflections would be your choice—you are a very foolish girl—and utterly unacquainted with your real advantage.

I have, however, a reckoning to adjust with you, Mrs. Penelope, therefore we will quit sentiment, and descend to wrangling.

I must beg leave to make you sensible of the folly and absurdity of your mounting,
ing,

ing the great horse, some two months ago, on my informing you, that I had no objection to fixing myself for life, on the same spot with my friend Mrs. Leicester. I thought you had understood, that that was the very purport of my visit—in-deed I never once dreamt of the gentle Freeman—but might there not have been some equally gentle swain, to have answered the intention, if he had been out of the question.

Need I tell you, that she was the acquaintance, the friend of my infancy; and that each revolving year added treble increase to our tender affection: nay, was it not from your listening with so much patience to my conversation, when she was the subject, the original recommendation to my favour and confidence. Your heart, I allow, is very prettily turned for every soft and generous sensation, but you must not, like Leicester, feel too strongly—I hate every shadow of selfishness.

Apropos

Apropos to Leicester, could you ever have conceived it possible, that he should have contracted such shocking humours.

You know him well, modesty, politeness, ease and ingenuoufness, were wont to be the only visible actuators of his conduct and conversation; but I perceived, the very hour I arrived, that he was greatly and alarmingly changed.

His eyes have a wildness and impatience, and he is to the last degree inquisitive and attentive, on the most trifling occasions—which was too plain an indication of the passion, to which some constitutions are particularly liable, for me to be deceived; to behold an object with too much partiality, is a misfortune—as we are mighty apt to measure our neighbours feelings by our own: and conclude, that what we so abundantly dread to lose, is fought to be obtained by all that approach it.

But notwithstanding I have been both an eye and an ear-witness of many malicious

cious absurdities—the subject is of too tender a nature for me to start to a wife, that apparently seeks to elude every opportunity of falling upon it—nor have I once spoke my sentiments, except to my good man and yourself. What a blessed thing it is, that he has nothing of the kind in his composition. I consider it as a distemper or lunacy of the soul, and when once attacked, for ever incurable.

Indeed, where a woman's conduct is in any degree blameable, or when a notorious villain seeks too many occasions to entertain her, I think it far from unnatural, that a delicate and fond husband should be disturbed: but when neither the one nor the other is the case, and he is wholly indiscriminate in his apprehensions, I despise both him and them.

Mrs. Leicester, as I have frequently told you, is that very wife every woman ought, but few or none are capable of becoming, she lives but to oblige him; but how she can dispense with his infirmity,

mity, or childishness of temper, I have not the least idea; there is one article she has had the address to execute, that I think is a master-piece in more respects than one—her husband has no suspicion of her having refused Lord Clerage, tho' absolutely for his own dear sake; shew me the female, my girl, besides herself, that would not loudly have boasted of her constancy, her disinterestedness—and by over-parading the matter, have given him reason to suspect she repented her heroism.

But what is greater than all the rest, is, that Mrs. Le Fever remains perfectly satisfied with her son-in-law: nay, looks upon him as the most valuable of husbands. There is an amazing subtilty in his conduct in this respect, almost bordering upon the subtilty of madness—for I have seen him treat her with the highest respect, even at the very period that he has been rendering her daughter the most miserable of women—by a thousand new invented arts of tormenting—
such

such as insulting her for some chearfulness he has observed in her behaviour, and to which he has himself incited her—some civility she has shewn to those he has called his friends—or some expressions of approbation he has extorted from her for any new acquaintance—yet this fit once over, and never was man more tender or affectionate—for my part, I could as soon fly as endure such perplexed circumstances—ill-nature may be supported, but these unreasonable transitions, from dissatisfaction to dotage, who could comply with them.

Tho' it is, my Penelope, a wayward unsteady sex at best: and perhaps Freeman, all-insinuating as he now appears, would be tempted to exercise his power, if he was but as sure of his subject.

If he was to take it into his wife head, to make the experiment from conceiving, that the favoured companion of such a woman as Mrs. Leicester, must necessarily

rily follow her example, how would he find himself deceived.

Instead of tamely persisting in an appearance of ease and happiness (as she so successfully assumes, as almost to impose upon me in spite of the evidences of my own senses) I would proclaim my resentment far and near, all the town should not only know when I was in the pouts, but I would cuff the cause over and over in whatever company I might happen to be cast in—what pity that, with so fine a spirit—there is so little prospect, from the disposition of my worthy spouse, of my having many opportunities of displaying it.

But trisler that I am—to neglect those necessary preparations, for the reception of my husband's first friend, that I am sensible would be a greater reflection upon my breeding and understanding, than the most servile submission to the rational injunctions of an honest good-natured lord and master.

Mr.

Mr. Clayton is hourly expected, my dear, and should he answer the description I have received of him, I have a scheme for adding your Ladyship to the happy society of your friend, and your friends friends at Brickley.

I am, &c.

M. FREEMAN.

LETTER XVII.

Lord CLERAGE to Sir GEORGE HENDON.

NOW, George, you are once more my friend, the healer of my peace, and guardian of my honour; nor will I ever abuse your generous, your humane, toleration.

I reached this town of Brickley pretty early in the evening.

Freeman was from home, at the parson's truly—his wife and him almost live there—happy Freeman——but beware young

young man—the dangerous connection, notwithstanding your union with an amiable woman, and most valuable principles, may cost you dear—Mrs. Leicester cannot be beheld with too much caution.

Freeman, the moment he heard I was arrived, hurried over to receive and congratulate me—and Leicester, from abundant civility, following close at his heels, insisted on my supping with his family.

I pleaded fatigue, dishabille—but he would have no denial. No ceremony was to subsist between us: his fire-side knew not what it meant—and he had quitted it with a promise to introduce me there.

I had objections, I had palpitations, but what could I say—there is no resisting some people's persuasion—in a word, I suffered myself to be conducted to a scene my heart panted after, tho' it was very unfit to encounter it.

We entered the parlour.

On one side the chimney, in an easy chair (for I found she had been a little

indisposed) sat the agreeable Mrs. Le Fever; and opposite to her, on an humble seat, for the convenience of performing the nurse's part, one of the fairest mothers in the creation.

A little cherub, the image of herself, sat smiling on her knee; telling her all those interesting (though unintelligible) tales, peculiar to its tender and endearing age: whilst she beheld it with the beautiful transports of maternal affection.

Freeman's wife, with a lively and ingenuous aspect, was standing before her, increasing and participating her delight, by repeatedly calling forth the innocent raptures of the darling boy.

Leicester, with no ill grace, presented me to his mother and our new neighbour; Madam, said he, is, I hope, future friend—my dear, addressing Mrs. Leicester—Mr. Freeman's much valued Mr. Clayton.

I bowed upon her hand, but did not venture to salute her.

Mrs.

Mrs. Freeman is extremely agreeable, and said many obliging and sprightly things, to the visible satisfaction of her husband, and all the company.

I stole a view, at every convenient period, at a face that I once—it is over, George, and cannot be recalled—the bloom is rather faded, and the vivacity less striking—but I flatter myself, it is merely owing to the nature of the offices she is at present engaged in—for it is impossible to be a rascal to such a woman.

We had a genteel, though frugal supper; served up with a propriety and decorum that surprized me—but she was certainly intended for a person of quality—or rather was formed to adorn, whatsoever sphere she might be cast in.

It is wonderful that pleasure can so intoxicate us—I forgot my fatigue—I lost my sense of every sorrow—except now and then that my eyes would unfortunately meet the happy Leicester's, when

—but it is not in the power of language to speak my feelings.

We took our leave at eleven o'clock, and I was visited with so flattering a dream, that I awaked with regret, and arose with mortification.

I am, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER XVIII.

From the Same to the Same.

O! Hendon, who can with so much propriety exclaim, that they have two souls, as your unhappy friend.

When the good one predominates, how do I abhor every unworthy attempt upon this angel of a woman: yet when the bad one gains the ascendancy, my desires, my wishes, my resolutions, are altogether infernal.

But

But do not conceive, that I am a jot more culpable for beholding and conversing with her—for if there is a remedy on earth for my distemper, it is to be alone derived from that very circumstance—I might be deceived with false hopes, and false expectations, when at a distance—but to see her, is to be convinced, how vain and injurious every idea of Mrs. Leicester's, that is inconsistent with Mrs. Leicester's honour or purity.

I am an amazing favourite with the whole family at the parson's.

Mrs. Le Fever finds something in my conversation and sentiments, that is extremely agreeable to her.

Leicester, from thinking himself safe in my friendship, over-whelms me with civilities—so unsightly a figure I own has no very dangerous or threatening appearance—but he that judges from the outside alone will ever be liable to the grossest errors.

And the dear woman, Sir George, from being relieved, in her connexion with me, from all that mortifying restraint, the peculiarity of her husband's temper, generally lays her under, acknowledges that she is much pleased with my company. She leans upon my arm, when I conduct her home of an evening from her friends—prattles to me with such sweet, such enchanting familiarity, that I am afraid I shall betray myself in a moment, when I least intend it, and that may prove the most unpropitious.

She has both a son and a daughter; the little Philip is an engaging child—the other quite an infant. There would be no resisting the flattery of his being my name-fake, if the priest himself could not boast the same advantage—his tender caresses have nevertheless an unspeakable charm for me—and when I tell you, that I frequently receive him from his mother's arms—all warm, and glowing with her endearments—you cannot wonder, that

that Leicester's interest in him should be forgot—and that I consider him as wholly her's.

Mrs. Freeman has an arch and penetrating pair of eyes—it may be only conscious guilt—she often terrifies me.

As her husband's friend, I stand high in her esteem—but should she once suspect me of designs upon her beloved Mrs. Leicester, I should be instantly blown up.

I was at church yesterday—in order to feast my sight, rather than to attend to the miserable pastor. Tho' in all events I could not have avoided the ceremony, on the grand holiday of the week, as Mrs. Leicester calls it, without being deemed an absolute heathen.

In London, Mrs. Le Fever took occasion to observe, nothing is so frequent as thin congregations—the inhabitants of that city, have a thousand dissipations unknown to our nymphs and swains—for which reason, continued she, they are un-

able to divest themselves of the *weak* idea that praise and adoration is due to an all-creating, and all-preserving Being—nor could they withhold them without fear and trembling.

I was too callous to be much affected by this stroke—but shall I confess to you, how wonderfully I was agitated by the amiable example of that fair idol, to whom alone I imagined all my devotion would have been directed.

I sat in Leicester's pew.

To hear that best of women confessing her sins—made me shudder at the conviction of my own unworthiness.—To find her pouring out her pious soul in thanksgiving—suggested the recollection of the blessings I had abused.—To see that fair creature humbly intreating protection, (that I could almost have been so prophane as to imagine, was the peculiar care of some bright spirit,) gave me a shocking idea of the dangers I might incur. But when she audibly

bly joined in the responses, and did not hesitate to beseech the Lord of life to deliver her from *adultery*, my heart reproached me, as if I had actually dared to entertain the base hope of reducing her to such circumstances, as must have infallibly closed her lips for ever upon that subject, and with scorpion teeth have preyed upon her peace. I felt myself at that moment so perfectly in love with religion and virtue, that I resolved to become quite a new being—and by cherishing the piety I had respired from her breath, render my self as remarkable for the sobriety and integrity of my manners, as ever I had been for the other extream.

And could this really have proved the case, George, how should we have rejoiced in the execution of that very scheme, that so lately appeared intirely ineligible?

But, alas! alas! Error and inconsistency, will ever creep into the human
F 5 heart;

heart ; and I can only assure you, am still
your unfortunate

&c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER XIX.

Mrs. FREEMAN to Miss GIBSON.

YOU shall have Clayton, my Penelope ; I have told him all your perfections, both personal and mental—therefore, pack up your trinkets I beseech you, and away.

If Freeman was one of your jealous-pated fellows, what a fine time I should have of it ; left as I am, whole hours to my own inventions—or what is still worse—to the company and conversation of Mr. Clayton. But he, good soul, has not only a very high opinion of me, but what is quite as essential, a very decent
one

one of himself——I shall hardly make you comprehend me, tho'——for never was being farther from confidence, or nearer humility——but he has no idea of a woman's preferring him one day to all the world, and the next wandering after new connexions——if he had sufficient merit to engage, why not to retain their affections?——In short, I believe he is almost so harmless, as to think no *wife* capable of becoming a worse prostitute, than any that walk the streets of London. They, poor wretches, persist in their profligacy, to procure themselves a bitter subsistence——but what shall we say for the woman that degenerates into vice; when the sacred ties of faith——the tenderest of connexions, the highest indulgence, and an easy fortune, ought to teach her the most lively and heart-felt sentiments, of gratitude and thanksgiving.

Congratulate me, my girl, upon my uncommon felicity.

F 6

I shall

I shall never love this Leicester, there is something so mean and illiterate, in taking advantage of the sweetness and sensibility of his wife's nature, that I cannot bear to think of it—she certainly is, tho' she will not acknowledge it, my dear, a very unhappy woman. If she was one of the weak complaining beings, I should not have half the apprehensions for her—but the people, who, from generosity, a sense of duty, or worthy pride, take affliction to their breasts, and there make the most of it, are the very people that fall a sacrifice to its pernicious operations.

And shall this lovely, this most unexceptionable of creatures, be so cruelly destroyed—there is no remedy—yet is resignation almost an impracticable virtue. The fond tyrant talks of going to London, to meet some relations, for a week or ten days, but I despair of the happy period's ever arriving.

Mr. Clayton has, however, introduced both life and joy amongst us, and Mrs.
Lei-

Leicester is tolerated in the utmost approbation of him.

Freeman (but who could forbear loving the truly good-natured harmless mortal) is a very great favourite with his wife's friend, for which reason I have frequently seen him coolly received by the narrow-souled Leicester. Yet Clayton, whatever is the meaning of it, bears all before him, and we only want the addition of your company, to be as completely happy as we can reasonably expect to be—for has not every condition its allay.

We have received an invitation to dine with Hilton our 'squire: I hope it will be some entertainment to Mr. Clayton; but, for my part, as Leicester will not permit his wife to visit there, it will be very little pleasure to me.

I will neither send you an account of that day's expedition, nor, upon recollection, make the least addition to the length of this letter—for have I received any
answer

answer to my last—settle that point, if you please, in a proper manner, or you will not find me as usual

Yours, &c.

M. FREEMAN.

LETTER XX.

Lord CLERAGE to Sir GEORGE HENDON.

FREEMAN's gratitude is unbounded—he perfectly makes a shew of me. When I walk out, I frequently over-hear the hinds say—there goes the *gemmen* that made Dr. Freeman's fortune. I would have chose to have been less popular, but his meaning is too good to be in any degree offensive.

I am to dine to-morrow at the 'squire's: Leicester neither visits him, nor suffers him to visit at his house, from suspecting,

as

as I am informed, that he beholds his wife with too favourable an eye.

He is a compleat sportsman I find—possesses a good estate, an uninformed heart, and a boisterous disposition—I cannot therefore promise myself any happiness in the acquaintance—but it was not avoidable without too great particularity.

I can write no more at present, I am not in an easy vein: perhaps to-morrow entertainment may chase away the kind of spleen that now hangs upon me.

Freeman, his wife, and your friend *Clayton*, arrived at the 'squire's about two, and met with a warm tho' rustic reception: dogs, horses, and the glories of the chase, filling up the whole preceding space, to the smoking and substantial meal.

The glass was afterwards pushed with much vigour and alacrity—Mrs. Freeman, and an elderly maiden, sister of the 'squire's, very prudently took the hint—
and

and retired from conversation that was in danger of becoming too noisy and robust for their participation.

When a variety of jovial songs, and the frequent clearing away of empty bottles, had proclaimed the good humour and sociability of the company, we were called upon by the master of the feast for our favourite toasts.

I myself, said he, will set you the example, none but friends and men of honour are present—come, bumpers all—here is the fairest woman in his Majesty's dominions.

Sir, returned I, merely from judging it necessary to say something, you must be more explicit: every man naturally believes the epithet you have bestowed upon your mistress, to be due to his own—nor do I know, or any other gentleman at the table, whether it may not be mine that you have now toasted—we must therefore insist upon the name.

Aye,

Aye, aye, exclaimed all the ruffians in a breath——no encroachments on your neighbour's territories——the name, the name.

Never let it transpire then, said he, for the Lady's sake ; Mrs. Leicester, you may depend upon it I was highly delighted.

You have an elegant taste, Sir, returned I, concealing my chagrin in the best manner I was able——nor is this the first time that I have heard her stiled the fairest of the fair.

Upon my soul, Sir, said he, I look upon her as the most lovely of creatures : and would give half my estate to enjoy the same opportunities of entertaining her, that you are blessed with : but the paultry scoundrel of a parson keeps me at bay, conscious, I suppose, that he has disqualified the lady, by his unkind treatment of her for standing a long siege.

Do you then imagine, Sir, cried I, that you should find her an easy conquest?

What

What should hinder it, returned he, with boorish confidence, but that fellow's watchfulness : if I could but once ingratiate myself into his favour—the Lady I believe would not be very inaccessible.

And dare you advance so base an insinuation, demanded I, provoked beyond all bounds.

Nay, Sir, returned he, calmly, restrain your warmth, I am no fighter—you speak from experience, I presume : what we have never attempted, we are apt to fancy may be easily accomplished.

Judge of the resentment, George, by which I was agitated—to hear the purest and chastest of her sex mentioned so unworthily :—but my consideration for her reputation and repose was superior with me to every other—to have chastized the wretch, would have been only to have given a sanction to his black inuendo : scandal was never suppressed by violence, nor vanity subdued by the strongest convictions.

It

It is my custom, Sir, said I, affecting to laugh (though without any visible incitement) to hold the virtue of my neighbour's wife too sacred even for suspicion. You apprehend yourself formidable with the gentleman, but is it either a just or natural inference, that you must therefore be irresistible with the lady—I confess myself so far from seeing the matter in the same light you do, that I wish it was possible for me to introduce you to her acquaintance, to teach either you or myself a more just opinion of her than we seem at present to entertain.

Sir, your humble servant, cried he—but, however, I might be obliged to you on that occasion: your friend Leicester, would have but little to thank you for—one month, I would ask but one month to compleat the whole business. Was it not a dreadful circumstance to be restrained from closing so prophane a mouth!

Unhappy injured charming creature—do I live to hear thee traduced by the
most

most grovelling of his species; but his presumption and arrogance shall cost him dear—he shall be convinced, that Mrs. Leicester is a woman without her sex—if breach of delicacy, faith, or virtue, can be supposed to be female characteristics.

The rest of the conversation was as brutal as the company, and I returned home fatigued, disgusted, and deeply wounded.

Upon my word, gallantry is a most noble profession, since every two legged animal can conceive himself qualified for success in it; nor shall I ever regret, that my impudent, my enterprizing spirit, has forsaken me.

How shall I contrive to reconcile Leicester to his visits—they shall meet at Freeman's, and we will wean him by degrees from his too just antipathy.

That a fellow should be capable of so unnatural and preposterous a supposition: that because a husband is cursed
from with

with absurd fancies, the wife must run into his arms; yet I must with shame acknowledge, George, that he is infinitely more excusable than your friend; he has never exchanged one single syllable with Mrs. Leicester; is utterly unacquainted with all her amiable principles; and as her *eye speaks softness and love*, has to little refinement too discover that *discretion, with a scepter, sits upon her brow*; whilst I, notwithstanding all my experience, my convictions was half inclined to flatter myself, that the suspicions of her husband would render her a very wife—I disclaim—I henceforth disclaim all such vulgar errors, and will ever remain

Your's, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER

LETTER XXI.

From the Same to the Same.

I Breakfasted with Leicester this morning, and have diverted him not a little, with a description of such part of the 'squire's humour, as was proper for him to be made acquainted with.

I am surpris'd, said I, in the course of our conversation, that you and him are not upon a good footing—he has his foibles, but is far from ill-natured, and professes himself well affected towards you and your family.

He made a very lame excuse for the coolness he had practis'd; and consented to give him the meeting in a few days at Freeman's—when the wretched rustic, will soon discover the folly, baseness, and injustice of his wise conjectures.

I have now been above two months in the country, lying in wait for some encouraging moment, to surprise this long-loved

loved woman into a private friendship—never start, George—indiscretion is several removes from criminality—you had had a clue to my designs, and might have recalled me in due time to save us both.

But for your satisfaction, and my security, I must tell you, that her behaviour is at all times so judicious, so perfectly conformable to the strictest and nicest rules of decorum and delicacy, that I find it impossible to commit the slightest breach of either the one or other, without being totally exploded.

Thus, my friend, it is most evident, that virtue can render itself respectable and sacred, tho' undefended by ill-manners, or austerity, (a mistake that some ladies are too apt to fall into,) for, when once it is apparent from the whole tenor of a woman's conduct, that her *soul* is pure, who can approach her without reverence.

Her cheerfulness is the best indication of her mind's health, her language the emblem

emblem of her elegant conceptions, and her piety the strongest testimony of her divine origin—the beauty, the loveliness of her person, may for a moment inspire such wishes, as incited me to visit Brickley—but they must receive an infallible check, or at least be reduced to tender regard, by the genuine display of still superior perfections.

I have some distant hopes of rendering this bold wretch serviceable to my own purposes. He shall have an opportunity of exercising his odious, clumsy arts, to allure her to his views—and I, as by accident, will betray my knowledge of his proceedings—she will be terrified at the effect they would have upon her husband's mind, if revealed to him—and I would not only advise her to preserve them secret, but offer my best assistance—she—but you must have an idea by this time, of the natural progression of a growing intimacy—and may without any farther

ther light, trace it out to its final termination.

It is very true, Sir George, your friend Clerage was an unsuccessful fellow in most of his undertakings—the impetuosity, the impatience of his disposition ever defeating his own purposes.

But Clayton, with all that fire Clerage is possessed of, has a happy sedateness, a deep penetration, a quick apprehension, and an animated invention—you shall only hear what a pretty cats-paw he has made of his rustic acquaintance.

Leicester, his wife and mother, no sooner saw the 'squire's coach stop at Freeman's, than they hurried over, lest they should make them wait dinner.

Freeman introduced them to the overbearing wretch—which piece of strained civility, hurt poor Clayton not a little—Mrs. Leicester's lips were never formed for such barbarous salutations.

The pastor was obliged to attend a funeral in the afternoon—it was a lucky

incident—nor did the 'squire fail to avail himself of it—and by pouring forth a volley of stupid compliments, and behaving with the most awkward particularity, occasioned many significant and discouraging changes, in the lady's intelligent and lovely features.

Leicester, at length returning, the 'squire became very tractable—but whispered me on his departure, (with an air of the highest exultation,) that the game was now happily started, and he had nothing to do, but to run it down.

One meeting in the country, as naturally begets another, as—but I will give you the simile, when I do not abound with subject matter.

We were all invited to the 'squire's, Mrs. Leicester laboured hard to be excused going; but her husband (supported by my persuasions,) for that very reason, exerted his utmost authority, and she was too dutiful to persist in her refusal.

As

As Clayton was helping her over a stile, at some little distance from the rest of the company ; I am forry, Madam, said he, that we cannot be happy, but at your expence ; what can occasion your aversion to this visit.

You must have too much discernment, Sir, returned she, to mistake the cause. Mr. Stilton's character is a most profligate one ; his manners and conversation, very far from unexceptionable. I do not mean to insinuate, that he has any other designs upon me, than he would entertain against any other female. But a married woman ought to be, beyond measure, nice in her connexions. Had I been a man, I had been a Cæsar, with respect to my wife—nor would it have been sufficient with me, that she was really virtuous, but she must have been thought so ; and who can answer for the consequence of giving into an improper acquaintance—his rude breath, Sir, might

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destroy

destroy in one moment, more than a whole century could repair.

There's for you—are we not coming to the very point my heart has been so long set upon—yes, my sweet creature, you are yet destined to heal the wounds I have received! and tho' wedded to another, your tenderest affections shall at last be mine.

Mrs. Freeman, by her agreeable vivacity, preserved the harmony and good understanding of the whole party—and we returned well satisfied, and well pleased, both with ourselves and each other.

Hitherto, my George, I have not taken one step to offend even your rigid virtue—Mrs. Leicester has more than ever recommended herself to my fondest approbation—I must admire, I must doat upon her—but will find my consolation in knowing myself her friend, and friend of my faithful Hendon.

I am, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER

LETTER XXII.

From the Same to the Same.

EASTER, Whitsuntide, and Christmas, are the most convenient, as well as happiest periods in the whole rural round of life.

Stilton, from a fond and preposterous persuasion, that his frequently repeated awkwardness and assiduity had obtained him some degree of unwarrantable interest, in the chastest of human hearts, gave us all an invitation to his house, to celebrate the Whitsun-feast.

Great preparations, we were informed by-the-by, had been for some time carried on, in order to render the scene at once, marvellous and delightful, and as we were sensible his gardens, in Lord Chalkstone's language, had *very pretty capabilities*, our expectations were raised to a very decent pitch.

Never did my lovely woman appear to greater advantage, than upon this occasion, by Mrs. Freeman's management and assistance—who insisted upon it, that her fair friend should for once convince Mr. Clayton, that she did not over-rate her personal perfections, in her description of them, when unobscured by her matronly arts.

Her hair was disposed with the utmost grace, by the judicious hand of this affectionate Lady—her gown, by the same election and authority, was a pale pink sattin; her petticoat and shoes white, ditto, and her linen such as she had wore in her day of elegance.

How, did this agreeable and generous Mrs. Freeman then exult in the charms she had drawn forth, utterly insensible to the beautiful negligence, pleasing vivacity, and lovely benevolence, so apparent in herself.

The parsonage-house was in our way to the hall. Freeman and I were to join company

with the priest and the ladies there.

Leicester offered his arm to Mrs. Le Fever, whose eyes sparkled with maternal complacence; and communicated an increase of satisfaction to every heart. To your care, Mr. Clayton, said the deluded husband, I commit my wife—Freeman will escort his—and thus we shall be all comfortably paired.

How unaccountable is prejudice! How erroneous credulity! Freeman, tho' married to the object of his choice—tho' his principles are pure, his conduct irreproachable, and his constitution free from every vice, is more formidable in Leicester's sight, than an imposture—a sly insinuating villain—and the deepest of designers. But here lies the stumbling-block of his wife judgment—Freeman's person is pleasing, and his disposition lively—whereas, famine and mortification seem to have marked the miserable Clayton for their own.

We were ushered immediately on our arrival at the 'squire's—into the gardens. A variety of objects seized our eyes.

Alcoves, Chinese temples, falls of water, shady retreats, wide extended lawns, and flowery borders, proclaimed at once the taste and expence of their wrong-headed owner.

On the largest canal, in humble imitation of what you meet with at Ranelagh, was a kind of pavilion, furnished with a band of the best musicians that could be procured on a very short notice, (for this sublime stroke was not resolved upon, until the very preceding day to its execution,) who scraped here and there a bit of Alexander's feast, to the inexpressible delight and entertainment of several of the principal farmers, their wives and children, in the whole neighbourhood.

Dinner was served up in a spacious alcove; and liberal libations offered to the goddesses of health and festivity.

Hilton

Hilton seldom or ever quitted Mrs. Leicester's side, his admiration, his sensibility of the improvement in her appearance, could not be concealed.

Her husband seemed determined to rise superior to himself for that day at least; and having repeated to me in a sort of careless jocular manner, as he passed us soon after dinner, that to my care he committed his wife, and at my hands he should require her, at the conclusion of the evening, left her entirely free from all interruption. I could not but observe, however, that he frequently turned his head towards us—when perceiving I was true to my trust, he appeared content. I say appeared, George, for his heart could not be perfectly unagitated, from the nature of his tenderness, and the invaluableness of the object—for was it not Mrs. Leicester?

Some of the tenants daughters, in the habits of shepherds and shepherdesses, presented us with several rustic dances—and about ten o'clock at night an ill-con-

ducted fire-works was played off, which was to be succeeded by a ball, in a large room illuminated for the purpose.

After this last piece of folly had been exhibited, we were directed to return to the house. Our numbers were greatly increased, and some little disorder arose in the procession, from several of the gentlemen's being much elevated.

I would have persuaded Mrs. Leicester to accept of my arm for her protection, but she politely declined it—and in the next instant, I had the mortification to find, she had been hurried away by the croud quite out of my sight.

It immediately occurred to me, that some villainous artifice had been practiced—and I began to accuse myself as the indirect cause of whatever misfortune might be the consequence. I was too well acquainted with her husband's disposition, however, to venture to communicate my apprehensions, except at the last extremity: I therefore, breaking thro' the

the croud, resolved to seize the first servant I met, and compel him to discover his master's diabolical schemes.

I had scarce reached the end of a short walk, before I perceived a fellow I soon recognized, parading before a little flat summer-house, that was almost buried in rose-bushes and lillies, as a spy or guard. I collared him without farther ceremony. Mrs. Leicester cried, I (half-choaked with rage and apprehension) where has Mrs. Leicester been conveyed to—the guilt, the self-importance of your aspect convinces me, that you are the prime agent in the base transaction.

He pointed to the summer-house—my horror was inexpressible—I dragged him to the entrance, and obliged him to add his strength to mine to force the well-secured door.

The moment the sweet creature beheld me, she flew to me for protection. I have been grossly insulted, cried she—but let me leave the hateful spot, and if

possible forget the unprecedented breach of honour and hospitality.

The villain, all discomposed in his drefs, and sinking with cowardly confufion, would have made the moft abject confeffions—but ſhe hid her lovely face with her hands—and only repeated, let me leave the place, and if you have ſo much humanity, as not to aggravate the injury, I will promiſe you ſhall never have an opportunity of repeating it—my huſband's peace, next to preſerving my perſon from violation, is my deareſt conſideration—but my good Mr. Clayton, added ſhe, do not delay the accompliſhment of the bleſſed work you have began—remove me from this ſcene—and by ſilence and ſecrecy, reſpecting the unhappy circumſtances from which you have delivered me, ſecure me from every otherwiſe conſequential evil.

I will wait upon you in the morning, Sir, ſaid I, with a menacing air, to the deſpicable culprit—the lady's peace muſt be
be

be our first, our only care. Trembling and terrified, I then conveyed her almost in my arms into the house.

Suppose you complain of illness, Madam, said I, I fear the complaint will but be too just——but it is necessary you should remain some time in Miss Stillton's apartment, to recover yourself, and a reason must be assigned to the company for the not joining them—I will send your friend, Mrs. Freeman, to revive and cheer you.

I have obligations, Sir, returned she—what indeed do I not owe you—but I apprehend I shall never have the courage to do you the justice to reveal them to any one—if my poor husband was ever to hear—

Let it never be mentioned, Madam, —this moment, this blessed moment, cried I (pressing her closer in order to render myself more useful) shall consign the whole remembrance to oblivion. I have only assisted you in the same degree I
would

would any other injured suffering person—and humanely receive, but can confer no obligations.

I conducted her to a parlour—sent for Miss Hilton, and Mrs. Freeman—bowed and retired.

The 'squire having rectified the disorders in his appearance, ventured to enter the ball-room. He had not the confidence, however, once to encounter my eyes. His expressions, when he was compelled to speak, were wild and incoherent, and his behaviour absurd and inconsistent: but as he had been observed to drink very freely, no one was surprised either by the one or the other.

Leicester was not affected by the information of his wife's indisposition, as I had apprehended he would—he only smiled, and said, he hoped she would soon be better. I could not refrain from commenting upon his coolness to Freeman, who soon gave me to understand, that it proceeded from his knowledge of
the

the circumstances she was then under, which subjected her to frequent, tho' not dangerous, interruptions of health.

This intimation had nevertheless a very different effect upon me, to which it was intended to produce—should the consequence be fatal to her life—heaven, kind heaven, for once be propitious to a sinner's prayer, and spare this ornament of her sex (as you Hendon emphatically styled her, in an epistle that was far from being duly honoured) a little longer, to enliven and instruct this lower world.

We had the brute's coach to convey us home; and I passed a sleepless night, from revolving the scenes I had been engaged in.

Early next morning, according to appointment, I waited upon this black clumsy schemer (you see, George, your miserable friend is not the only existing villain) and threw his little unworthy soul into fearful trepidations.

I acknowledge, said he, Mr. Clayton, with shame and remorse I acknowledge my error; Mrs. Leicester's virtue is invincible; she is the fairest and the proudest woman I ever met with.

Wretch, cried I, and is that the best, the nicest distinction, you are capable of making, between chastity, and its opposite extreme. You, that was so confident of success—that had started your game—but you shall be given up to the just resentment of an injured and most tenacious husband.

For Mrs. Leicester's sake, returned he, for Mrs. Leicester's sake, Sir, I beseech you to forego this desperate resolution—you cannot make me suffer alone. Consider her present condition, remember the delicacy of her mind and body.

I could have shook him to atoms.

Thou cloven-footed preacher, exclaimed I—and can the mention of mercy fall from such unmerciful lips—Wherein did you consider her? Wherein did you spare her?

her? But you are so abject a mortal, that to parley with you, is to give you too much consequence. I have, however, thought of a means of revenging this most atrocious attempt, without involving the amiable Mrs. Leicester, in the smallest inconvenience. You shall this very day enter into a bond for your good behaviour for seven years to come. No hunting—no one scene of revelling or debauchery, shall you engage in during that whole period; the church is greatly out of repair; your hunters shall be disposed of; your hounds turned a-drift; and your huntsman discharged; and the profits arising from the sale of the former, and the reduced expences of the latter, shall be equally appropriated to that use. You shall likewise bestow a new gown and coat, and an annual dinner upon every poor parishioner, to celebrate your happy escape from at best a just prosecution; and above all the rest, you shall erect a temple, in the most conspicuous part of the village,
to

to that pure goddess you have so egregiously dared to prophane; and as you have given a proof of a pretty romantic turn in the improvements of your gardens, and your entertainments of the tenants—you shall next year, instead of fireworks, institute little games for the younger part of the neighbourhood; with songs and devices, in honour and promotion of that most lovely of virtue's fair-eyed chastity; and, finally, you shall remove yourself from Brickley (having given proper directions for all that I have mentioned) until the grand anniversary, when you shall return to weave and present the first garland to the atoning shrine.

What think you now, George, have I not a very tolerable idea of poetical justice.

Brutality is ever in conjunction with cowardice—he gladly complied with the prescribed terms, to clear himself from Leicester's wrath: and I shall by this method render him a future blessing, to
the

the country, where he has hitherto been an absolute pest.

I had the pleasure to find, on calling in at Leicester's, that my charming woman was much better than could have been expected; and that her husband and friends, were free from every suspicion of the true cause of her disorder.

I told them of the 'squire's intended decampment; and could perceive, that Mrs. Leicester had both sufficient generosity and understanding, to place it to the proper account—she thanked me with her eyes—I will follow her sweet example with the nicest punctuality—nor unless she herself tells the tale before me, ever suffer one syllable of it to transpire—her husband's temper so singular, can she be too cautious.

I find by Mrs. Freeman, that the uncertainty respecting the living, sits heavy at that heart whose peace is so peculiarly dear to me—but it shall be relieved from its anxiety in a post or two—

the

the mean, the scandalous, the villainous purpose, for which I reserved the discovery, exists no longer, and to make her happy shall be my first, my chiefest care.

I suppose you have heard of Arthur Johnson's misfortunes—success in evil, proves at last our bane—he is shut up in the Bastile, in all probability for life—some amour, either of his own, or that he warmly abetted, with a married Lady, has at length reduced him to the circumstances he has long since deserved.

I could almost become superstitious upon the occasion; and tremble for my own fate. But am I not punished far beyond whatever fetters or confinement could prove?—Do I not behold the only woman I ever did or ever can love, in the possession of another?—Do I not daily discover some new and enchanting perfection in her soul, to aggravate my misery? And have I the least prospect of its being mitigated? I may be calm,
George,

George, I may be tolerably composed—but to know all my hopes and happiness blasted in the very bloom of youth; to bear about the stings of remorse, and to feel the conviction that my own vicious, narrow spirit has been the occasion of all—is there any hell to exceed it?—Had I made an honourable application on my first knowledge, that it was Le Fever's daughter, that had inspired me with such uncommon approbation, and promoted her felicity in the promotion of my own? How blessed should I now have been—Leicester would then have made his visit too late—but take notice, my friend, she never will be mine, (or Providence must deviate from every general rule,) we see many men obtain their wishes, to convince them of their vanity and emptiness—many prosper in the way of vice, to augment their curse—but to obtain Mrs. Leicester, would be to obtain the greatest of rewards, and how little pretensions

tensions your Clerage has to every thing of that sort, you are but too sensible.

I am, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER XXIII.

From the Same to the Same.

NOW, George, or never, is the time to recommend myself; the surly keeper has forsook his charge, and left her an easy prey.

Such provocations—were I to relate them, would infallibly justify both her and me, even with so squeamish a fellow as yourself.—She is to be with us every day; and who knows which may be most propitious.

I can, I do perceive, that she esteems me—does a woman esteem her gallant, George?—Esteem and villainy, must be incom-

incompatible—and he is the vilest of villains, say you, that is capable, either of seducing the innocent, or taking advantage of the mortified and depressed female.

I grant you, it is a horrible thing to betray the young and unwary—there can be no triumph, as I have frequently told you, where there is no victory—and the simple, uninformed heart, is ill qualified for the resistance, that can alone gratify the proud and spirited lover. But with a woman of understanding, education, and experience, the case is quite otherwise—it is preference, it is choice, it is the most flattering of distinctions. What say you, to be a partaker with the *adulteress*, the instrument of her withered revenge, and the cause of entailing disgrace upon her tender, helpless offspring?—You are perpetually starting absurdities, Sir George—who is obliged to look so far into consequences and contingences—the Lady likes me, I like the Lady—she
thinks

thinks her husband ungrateful—I know him to be churlish—and so we conclude the business.

But, for once I have alarmed you without a cause; no vestal was ever held more sacred by the most superstitious heathen, than Mrs. Leicester's chastity by me—I am convinced it is invincible, and nothing is so foreign to my heart, as an intention to attack it. I will tell you Hendon, when a woman is cursed with such a husband as Leicester; yet retain her cheerfulness, or makes him the subject of either her ridicule or contempt—there is sufficient encouragement—but when every instance of unkindness apparently sinks deep, and the lovely sufferer seeks no other consolation, than what piety and resignation can give, she is, as it were, defended by ten thousand shields, and we consider her as invulnerable.

I am at present so near happiness, that if it was not for the evidences of Mrs. Leicester's

Leicester's uneasiness, I should never wish to change my situation.

What erroneous, what unworthy impressions do we receive of the women, by being acquainted with only the light, inconsiderate part of the sex. To ridicule, to stigmatize, to mis-represent them, has been the common-place wit of every petty author, and the practice of every age. But who can behold Mrs. Leicester, or Mrs. Freeman, and not venerate them—the practical virtues of the one, and the heart-felt ones of the other—are almost equally amiable—and have at least been instrumental to making one honest fellow happy.

Freeman and his fair companion are most excellently suited. He has the generosity, the capacity, to distinguish and approve, those perfections his wife has the judgment, the dexterity to display. Her vivacity is exercised for his amusement, her conversation adapted to his taste, and his felicity, the sole object of

her tender attention. With Mrs. Leicester, she is a soothing, with me an entertaining friend, and with Mrs. Le Fever, a most discreet and affectionate visitant. Happy, unenvied Freeman, your prosperity has indeed been built on my destruction—or rather you have been permitted to rise up as an irresistible conviction, that rewards and punishments are sometimes dealt out even in this life.

To tell you how comfortably we have enjoyed ourselves during Leicester's absence, is impossible—content has reigned in every heart—and friendship glowed in every countenance. What are the pleasures, the pursuits of vice, to such a period—it was indeed too blessed to be of long continuance. Mrs. Leicester received a letter this morning from our common disturber, acquainting her, that she will see him in the evening, if he is able to perform the journey—for that he has been seized with a fever, and finds himself very indifferent.

He

He loves to alarm, George, and I have neither hopes nor fears upon the occasion.

Mrs. Freeman looks arch—he is mortal, said she, when her friend was gone—tho' over-bearing and tyrannical.

I shall wait his arrival, with the patience of a philosopher, and let whatever be the event, will act agreeable to the character you wish me to preserve.

But, O! my friend, how shall I confess to you, that all the misery this most valuable of women has endured, with respect to her husband's temper, has all been derived from me. The poor wretched, injured Leicester—Freeman has discovered, that he is actually flighty at times.

I have employed a person to examine into his family—and am assured, no tincture of it can be found—his brain was certainly shook by the distresses I heaped upon him—save me, Hendon, O! save me from this most insupportable of reflections.

The secret must be buried in our own breasts—for what an object of horror

should I become to the wife—what a feind to the children of such a cruelly-treated being ; who was probably endowed with every requisite qualification for happiness.—But, if I dwell upon the desperate deed, or most fatal consequences, I shall myself, become frantic.

I am, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER XXIV.

From the Same to the Same.

POOOR Leicester is indeed returned, and greatly indisposed—a burning heat and strong pulse are sufficient to inform, even me, that a fever is working upon him.

His wife, notwithstanding all her provocations, has a tender and beautiful solicitude in her countenance. Her provision is undoubtedly at stake—but she is
superior

superior to every selfish consideration, and feels for him alone.

Freeman has been with him, and says he has every symptom of a malignant complaint, and that in all probability it will be fatal.

Two lovely children already in being, and a third not far distant—what must her apprehensions be—but was she not too high-minded to accept of the assistance of friendship? Do you not know a person that would rejoice in sheltering her from every inconvenience? Mrs. Le Fever is terribly alarmed—what will become of her dear child?—How will she support her separation from the best of husbands?—it makes her recollect all she herself has endured, and hoped her last comfort would have been exempt from.

Ah! thou worthy deceived creature—he is as little deserving of your regret as your daughter's affection—but he is, alas, what I have rendered him.

If he dies—she shall be mine—her children my children—her mother my mother, and her afflictions—but she should lose her sense of them, in my tendernefs and affiduity.

Would she yet perfift, is her refusal of me, as Lord Clerage, think you?—And fhall I beft fucceed under my prefent fober appearance?—We will give the confideration due weight at fome future period.

Mrs. Freeman has not left her friend fince her husband's arrival—every creature in the place are interefted in her happinefs—for, has fhe not long promoted theirs—fhe has been a bleffing to the neighbourhood—and fhall hereafter blefs—even me.

So violent a diftemper, muft foon terminate one way or other—that is a happy circumftance—the tortures of fufpenfe are hard to endure.

Freeman is puffing over—I muft enquire how matters go—if he fhould be

be better—well; would not that be a very comfortable piece of information—but he is not a kind husband, George—cease villain, will you not stop one step short of the grave—he is the father of a family—which family, if he is called away, shall be mine—nor shall they feel his loss, tho' but for a single moment.

He is much worse; and Mrs. Leicester begs to speak with me.

What can she want with me—I cannot restrain the progress of a raging distemper—my interest does not extend to the mansions of death—I am, however, pre-determined to comply with her request, whatsoever it may be—can she demand any thing, I could refuse to grant.

She was in her parlor, George, her eyes betrayed the too generous, and strong sensibility of her heart.

I beg your pardon, Sir, said she, rising on my entrance—but I am encouraged

by your general character, no less than my own private knowledge of your disposition, to entreat one great favour of you—my mother, she is my only comfort—is very unfit for melancholy scenes—will you, Sir, kindly persuade her to go to Mrs. Freeman's house, until we know the fate of the unhappy sufferer—and exert your humanity to preserve this most valuable part of me.

I was strangely let down by the tenor of this request—for to render myself in any degree serviceable to Mrs. Le Fever, was obliging myself rather than her—and I had flattered myself, quite the reverse would have been required of me.

You could not have asked any thing more agreeable to my inclination, Madam, returned I, than to support Mrs. Le Fever—where shall I find her, to engage her to favour me with her company—but who will take care of you, and lessen your fatigue.

I am

I am not sensible to any at present, Sir, said she—Mrs. Freeman will be with me as much as possible, and I shall do very well, when I once know my mother is happily situated—here she comes—if you will employ your rhetoric in so humane a cause.

I found it no easy task to prevail upon her to quit her child at so trying a period—but having remonstrated to her, that she had other children to demand her care—it was at last settled, that they and their nurse should accompany her to our habitation. She had, it seems, withstood the persuasion of every other person, but my arguments were enforced with the complacence of a stranger, and the weight of disinterestedness—which was what Mrs. Leicester depended upon in her application to me. This point got over, I returned once more to Mrs. Leicester's, in order to speak with Mrs. Freeman.

Consider, my dear Madam, said I, the alarming circumstances your friend is un-

der—do not permit her to undergo more fatigue than her strength can bear—and if possible save her from every suffering.

I shall do every thing in my power, Sir, replied the lady, but Mrs. Leicester upon these occasions changes her very nature. She is no longer the gentle, persuadable creature, you and I have ever known her—but obstinate and immovable—nor could you prevent her attendance upon her husband, if even her own life was in danger.

I know your affection for her, cried I, is equal to my own—yet I cannot help conjuring you, (but recollecting how unbefitting my warmth,) I am certain, added I, in a much lower key, you will be very careful of her—for she is a most amiable woman.

She beheld me with visible surprise, (we cannot be always upon our guard,) especially on these trying occasions, when all one's happiness is at stake.

Do

Do you think she will ever be Lady Clerage.

I am, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER XXV.

From the Same to the Same.

HE is dead, George—it was a folly to trouble you with vain repetitions of apprehensions and disturbances——he departed this very morning.

Mrs. Leicester never quitted his bedside, until he had breathed his last—but bears the shock and fatigue with amazing fortitude.

I wrote an account of his illness to Mrs. Leeson, who immediately sent down a present of fifty pounds, to defray extra expences, in case of the contingency that threatened, and has now taken place;

with the warmest assurances of friendship, in case Mrs. Leicester should become a widow.

Her close confinement, and watching, have altered her prodigiously.

I would have persuaded her to leave the house—but she says, death has no terrors for her, nor will she fly from it. She supported every turn of the unhappy sufferer's temper without complaint, even to the cruel reproaches, that she would rejoice in her survival, and soon bestow herself upon another.

Nor shall the prophecy be unfulfilled.

I have already applied to Lady Catharine, as from my proper self by letter, wherein I have informed her of Leicester's death, and my unextinguished affection for his charming widow—I have likewise intreated her ladyship to consider, that it is impossible for me to offer, or her to accept, of any assistance of mine, under her present circumstances—but I have assured her, that the moment
decency

decency will permit, I mean, to propose myself upon the same terms, she (Lady Catharine) once so much approved: I therefore must hope, I add, that she will not let her be reduced to the necessity (which must certainly otherwise be the case) of soliciting charity from any other quarter, by taking her under her protection—particularly as an expensive time is approaching, and she has even now two children that must be provided for.

Her answer cannot but be propitious; tho' she despised and ridiculed me for relinquishing my pretensions in favour of the deceased, and abhorred his very name—all animosity, all disesteem, ought now to terminate—soft rest his dust, for he was my Le Fever's husband; be all his faults forgotten, for he was the father of her lovely children.—No, no, George, it is only cowards that pursue beyond the grave—I am not one of those curs, that
can

can delight in teasing a carcase, that death has rendered sacred.

I can scarce forbear trusting the worthy hearted Mrs. Freeman with all my schemes. But the surest method not to be censured, is, to preserve unrevealed what might incur it: I will therefore persist in my secrecy, until it can no longer avail me—and will then break out in my own long neglected brightness, to captivate the fair Andromacha—she, in the anguish of her soul, weeps over her tender infants—but the good time will come, when weeping shall be no more—and she shall receive incontestible proofs of my repentance and love.

I am, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER XXVI.

Mrs. FREEMAN to Miss GIBSON.

POOOR Leicester—well—all is at an end with him, as I told you, in a few words, by the last post, and his wife
once

once more at liberty to make her fortune.

Lord Clerage may have his faults, Penelope; but he has displayed such goodness of heart, such delicacy towards our friend, that they ought never more to be remembered. Some person it seems, in the neighbourhood, informed him of Mrs. Leicester's circumstances.

He instantly applied to that unfeeling Lady Catharine, in her favour; and has obtained a hundred pounds a year for her, by way of annuity, so long as she remains a widow.

Had he offered his whole estate to have saved her from the last extremity, she would not have accepted a single shilling—but from the hands of Lady Catharine it cannot be refused; and with the addition of her mother's pittance, and Mrs. Leeson's friendly compliments, she may now provide for herself and family very comfortably in the country.

But

But to shew you the shocking nature of that woman of quality, reproaches would intermix with benevolence. She broadly insinuates, what she might have been—and concludes with hoping, that she has smarted too sensibly for her folly ever to repeat it—that such men as Lord Clerage, are not every day to be met with, and in general when once repulsed, their friendship is utterly lost—but that he had worked so strongly upon her tenderness (Lady Catharine know any thing of tenderness, my dear) by his renewed eloquence, as to make her recollect all the soothing the soft persuasion Kitty Le Fever was once mistress of—and in spite of all her resolutions to the contrary, induced her so far to consider her, as to save her from starving. She has a fine fortune—and for the poor children's sake, must be tolerated in her insolence—else who could endure it.

I suppose we shall hear more of his Lordship in due time; and if he had my
voice

voice before, which you are sensible he really had, it will now be doubled and redoubled in his interest.

Mrs. Leicester is certainly a most charming woman; but I would not wish, my Lord, to behold her at present—she is not the same creature, except in disposition, where she will ever remain unchanged.

Nothing upon earth could have so effectually relieved her as this annuity; I could idolize the first suggestor of it; the parsonage-house must be quitted as soon as possible—they are to live with us, at least for a year or so—and we shall all be one family, as we have long been one heart.

I strongly suspect there is a person, however, that must yet be unhappy, if my conjectures, respecting Lord Clerage's intentions, are just—and that is the valuable Clayton. I am convinced he loves her, better perhaps than he himself may have

have been aware of; and would soon be perking up his ears to solicit a return.

Well, surely Freeman and myself are patterns of conjugal felicity: nor can I wonder at Mr. Clayton's wishing to follow so happy an example. I do not remember that he has ever once attempted to oppose my inclination, or contradict my will—I may, therefore, with great propriety declare, I have never disobeyed him. I sometimes examine my glass, and now and then look into my mind, to discover, if possible, the charm that so astonishingly fascinates him—it lies not, my friend, within my depth, I do assure you. I am neither old, ugly, nor an absolute driveller—but certainly never merited the happy fate that has awaited me; nor could there be the least probability of my fixing so excellent a heart. I dare believe (nay he has told me so himself, as Sir Harry Seycamore says) that he (poor soul) thinks me in every degree equal to the incomparable Mrs. Leicester.

There

There is no accounting for it—but the very extraordinary people of each sex, are in general the most unfortunate; had Mrs. Leicester's merit been of a common size, she had perhaps avoided all the misery she has experienced—but then she would never have been Lady Clerage—there I am most effectually silenced—for to be a Lady, who would not endure a long succession of grievances.

I am, &c.

M. FREEMAN.

LETTER XXVII.

From the Same to the Same.

I AM so astonished, my Penelope—that I know not when I shall recover myself; this worthy Mr. Clayton, my husband's great benefactor, the friend of every heart, and the extraordinary favourite

rite

rite of the poor deceived Leicester's, is no other than that very Lord Clerage you have so frequently heard me mention : the manner I discovered it was this.

Mrs. Leicester is so indisposed, that she seldom quits her chamber, though little more than the common consequence of her present condition. Mrs. Le Fever naturally spends her whole time with her child, and we only visit them occasionally. Freeman is obliged to be absent many hours in the day with his patients—and Mr. Clayton, as he was called, generally amused himself with reading or writing, when he could not have our company, I have often wondered at the peculiarity of his humour.

I had been up stairs with Mrs. Leicester ; and finding her spirits would not bear much conversation, I told Mr. Clayton, that if he pleased, we would drink our tea that afternoon in my parlour.

He looked alarmed—is Mrs. Leicester worse, Madam, demanded he ?

No,

No, Sir, not as to her health I believe ; but she seems very low, and I fear our chat would be too much for her.

Just as you please, Madam, returned he (though with visible reluctance) and the tea was brought in.

Now, thought I, as the opportunity is so fair, I will feel his pulse a little, for I had too much regard for him, not to be grieved at any prospect of affliction to his heart.

What an alteration, said I, does a few years produce in some people—poor Mrs. Leicester—who, that knew Miss Le Fever, would conceive it possible.

Who indeed, returned he, hastily, yet is she still lovely—but recollecting himself, he in some degree moderated the warmth of his accent, and added, I heard she was a very fine young lady.

I looked at him, and could perceive, his countenance was much confused—imputing it, however, to a wrong cause, I passed it over. She was indeed, Sir, said

said I, the most beautiful creature I ever beheld; no wonder Lord Clerage was so captivated—he sighed, I fancy the impression is not yet totally obliterated.

Obliterated, cried he, a second time, forgetting himself, impossible—I fancy Mrs. Freeman (again restraining his feelings) the man that once loved Mrs. Leicester could not easily subdue his passion for her.

I have a great notion, said I, his lordship will renew his application, so soon as circumstances will permit—and I greatly hope she will be prevailed upon to accept of him.

Ten thousand blebs—exclaimed he, but checking himself, he did not finish the sentence; it will be very good of you, Madam, resumed he, after a pause, to interest yourself in his behalf, as his constancy and perseverance evince the strength of his affection.

I believe he deserves her, said I, (still so stupid as to be in the dark, with respect
to

to the real occasion of his odd behaviour,) but you will excuse me, Sir, if I tell you that I have observed some things in you, that bespeak the tenderest consideration for her; and I would not promote an union that might wound your peace.

My peace, Madam, (not apprehending me,) my peace, my happiness, replied he, all depend upon my success; she must not, she shall not, refuse my renewed——

How, Sir, cried I, you deal in contradictions surely—yet your language, your countenance, are too intelligent for me to be deceived—is it possible, that under this disguise I behold Lord Clerage.

Speak low I beseech you, Madam—you have detected me—you have surpris'd me into a discovery, I but yesterday resolv'd against—I am, indeed, that unhappy Clerage—you know all my iniquities, my sufferings—but to pity the miserable is your every day's practice—tho' as little deserv-
ing

ing of your kindness as the wretch now before you.

I again repeat, cried I, it is impossible—to what end can you have proceeded in the manner you have done; heaping favours upon a family, without their even suspecting their benefactor was so near—I can recall innumerable instances to my remembrance of your humanity, your delicacy and generosity, nor shall I ever fail to honour the merits of so noble a disposition.

Hold, Mrs. Freeman, said he, you are grossly deceived in your opinion of me. It is true, I have acted agreeable to all you mention, but since you have found me out in one respect, I will not conceal myself in another. I came down to this place for the most unworthy, the basest of purposes—but Mrs. Leicester's goodness and virtue awed me into repentance, and totally subdued the infernal principles by which I was actuated. I always held it for a rule, that when a man became
jealous

jealous without a cause, a woman resolved to justify his suspicions—and I hoped to have recommended myself to that kindness I conceived the husband had forfeited—and by degrees have reduced your all amiable friend, to the mean level of the worst of her sex. You, my good Madam, have nevertheless been an eye-witness of my conduct, formed even upon so detestable a plan. The bar to every honourable expectation is now removed; and if you can persuade yourself, that I am capable of making Mrs. Leicester happy, employ your voice in my favour, otherwise I will forego my pursuit, and never once interrupt her.

What a daring, and at the same time, what a great soul this man must possess.

I assured him of my vote and utmost interest, begged him not to quit our family—and impatiently wished for my husband's return.

I am concerned, said he, to think how Freeman will be shocked at the discove-

ry—to lose his friend, and find an impostor in his house—but I suppose it cannot be avoided.

Indeed, my Lord, replied I, I will not profess myself one of those wives, that can conceal much from their husband's; especially from such a husband as I am blessed with—you can have nothing to fear from him—he knows human nature, Sir, and, however vain the observation, is no stranger to the power of love—and the extraordinary goodness and benevolence you have so long practised, ought perfectly to erase every displeasing remembrance.

Freeman returned, tho' much fatigued with riding, with his usual good humour. I broke the matter to him, in the most prepared manner I was capable of—but I could perceive the loss of his friend, (as his Lordship foretold,) sunk very deep.

Lord Clerage was all condescension, self-accusation and penitence—and who would not have forgiven such an offender.

It

It was now agreed, that he should mention an intention to leave Brickley—and withdraw himself without the knowledge of any one; and that Mrs. Leicester should never be made acquainted with the particulars of his conduct, until she had been some time Lady Clerage.

His Lordship is either to build or purchase a house in our neighbourhood, and we shall all live, I hope, to bless the fertility and whimsicalness of his invention.

I received a message from Mrs. Leicester during our conversation, requesting my company; which I instantly complied with, and endeavoured to compose my features into their usual gravity.

But the thoughts of Lord and Lady Clerage, communicated such an irresistible degree of risibility to my whole aspect, that my friends challenged me for the good news the moment they beheld me, which I had bound myself to keep secret. I contrived, however, to amuse and trifle with them so dexterously, that they at

length lost their scent, and I came off triumphant.

Be comforted, my girl, you shall not lose a husband by the bargain—Clayton was a serious soul—we will find you something hereafter, that shall better suit your taste.

I am, &c.

M. FREEMAN.

LETTER XXVIII.

Lord CLERAGE to Sir GEORGE HENDON.

NOW, my friendly George, am I once more become a candidate for happiness in my own proper person.

The peace, the satisfaction I have so long enjoyed, in the friendship and approbation of these worthy people at Brickley, is put upon the hazard, in order to recommend myself in a character of still greater

greater importance—in a word, Freeman and his wife know me for that wretched thing Clerage.

But I have as yet no great cause for complaint; Mrs. Leicester lives, and is at liberty—and must yield herself to the united importunities of those persons that condescend to espouse my interest.

She has, its true, one alarming extremity to pass through; but why should it be more fatal at this, than other preceding periods—only to render me more completely undone.

Mrs. Freeman has kindly touched upon Clerage's merits, to the mother and daughter; intimating, that she heard it was his intention to offer himself a second time.

Mrs. Leicester appeared surprised, but not disagreeably; his Lordship, said she, must have too much delicacy, not to be sensible of the impropriety of visiting me for some months at least; for could I so soon forget what is due to the memory

of a husband, it is impossible I should become unmindful of my duty to my children—nay children yet unborn.

This restriction is unanswerable, and I will pay all proper honour to it. My cause shall be submitted to the intire management of Freeman and his wife; they are friends to each party, and will do them justice.

My bob-wig shall be hung up as a trophy of my victory; for I could by no other means on earth have been successful; and I shall ever rejoice in the recollection of my sober character.

I will tell you what I propose. I will apply to Lady Catharine for the seven thousand pounds she once offered me, and make Lady Clerage a settlement suitable to her merit and my love; then immediately, by deed of gift, divide her fortune equally amongst the little children; for they must not be exposed, George, to the precarious dependance on capricious wills.

Yet

Yet fair and flattering as my present prospects are, I cannot be the gay fellow you once knew me; nor even the actual obtaining Mrs. Leicester's hand can render me so. That base, that cruel action against her husband, with all its horrid consequences, perpetually haunts my breast; he might now have been alive, and beyond description happy, if my villainy had been unperpetrated—that way lies the most unspeakable of horror—ah! Hendon, let us fly it for ever.

In my private connexions, I have learned what I greatly wanted—a proper idea of domestic felicity; there is nothing comparable, my friend, to the union of two sensible and well cultivated hearts—it is indeed friendship—and it is something more—what are all the pleasures, the bustles I have been accustomed to, when put in competition with one evening's solid and substantial satisfaction.

I shall henceforth become a very singular man of quality. No forms will be ob-

served by me, but such as tend to confirm or promote the joys of society. My house shall ever be open to the worthy, (tho' unfortunate) part of my species, nor shall the first peer in the realm meet with a more welcome reception. They shall have the privilege of enjoying all that affluence can give, without my exacting that servile and too general price—the sacrifice of their sincerity or veracity—they shall not, George, be obliged to laugh at my *Lordship's* jest, however bold or unmeaning. “I will have no pins stuck upon my sleeve.”—The honest, the generous sentiments they feel, shall be communicated with all due confidence; nor shall they ever remember my superiority in the articles of title or fortune; but to reflect, how empty and contemptible those possessions, unless in conjunction with a noble and enlarged heart.

What woman so capable of entering into all my rational schemes, as Mrs. Leicester; she who was educated in all
the

the splendor, the folly of nobility ; experienced all the pride and haughty resentment that informs the over-grown soul ; and has been so severely disciplined in the school of adversity.

Happy Clerage, to have withstood the solicitations, the admonitions, of your friends ; and not, in order to extirpate the sense of disappointment, incurred the greatest of misfortunes—an indissoluble bondage.

How lifeless and unsatisfactory should I have found the conversation of any other woman—and by betraying the pre-engagement of my affections, the evil would only have been the more abundantly aggravated.

I am, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER XXX.

Mrs. FREEMAN to Miss GIBSON.

I AM, my dear Penny, under the greatest apprehensions upon Mrs. Leicester's account; she is, indeed, safely delivered from her late unweildy state; but a cough, that has for some time hung upon her, is in no degree abated, and Freeman seems to think, there is a strong probability of its stealing upon her lungs.

Lord Clerage has not the least idea of this alarming circumstance—he considers her as now released from every restraint, and looks forward with the utmost confidence.

It would be a dreadful stroke to Mrs. Le Fever, and an unspeakable misfortune to the poor children—pretty orphans—three of them, my girl—but they shall never want a protecting roof—I would endeavour to supply the loss they would sustain, Mrs. Leeson will never forget
her

her godson—and my Lord shall give this last boy a claim to his consideration and kindness—by the only means, perhaps, in his power.

He is to be christened privately, and *Mr. Clayton* will make his exit very soon afterwards.

The village and adjacent towns are apprised of his intention, and deeply affected by it—Freeman had the care of their healths, indeed; but his Lordship, ever since his arrival, has been always ready to relieve their hearts from suffering, either by his interest, bounty, or advice.

I know not which I ought to grieve most at—my friend's death, or his Lordship's disappointment; she would attain the final period of all her hopes, fears, and misery—but his future days must be embittered, by this second deprivation of her, now, that by long acquaintance, and the most amiable conduct, she has so infinitely endeared herself to his affections. In

his hour of gaiety, the loveliness of her figure, and the strength and improvement of her understanding, were the only objects of his admiration; but he has, during his residence amongst us, had an opportunity of observing the various operations of her most excellent principles, and the uniform sweetness of her disposition.

The air may, however, do much for her; and perhaps we may prevail upon her, to take a journey to Bristol.

She is easy in her provision, that is one grand specific, surrounded by her friends, and may continually amuse herself with the most innocent and engaging of companions, her children, for whom she has the tenderest feelings.

She has no violent affliction to contend with; from humanity, from a sense of her duty, and an inextinguishable something of regard, that we cannot divest ourselves of, for so near a relation as a husband, she left nothing undone, to prolong

long or render his existence comfortable; but now the tryal is past; it must be impossible for her to wish the fond tyrant restored; nor does she affect any absurdities. She will, hereafter, have no wayward humours to consult, no unnecessary mortifications to endure; but all will be so soothing and salutary, as (I flatter myself) will check the progress of this most fatal distemper.

My Lord has not yet seen her, since she began to sit up; and will be agreeably, surpris'd when he does obtain that indulgence, at the amendment in her looks, notwithstanding all her weakness; her beauty triumphs over disease, nay I believe death itself, in the first instance, will be incapable of subduing it.

I wonder what she will say, when she finds his Lordship is determin'd to make her an early visit. Can she be free from all that female vanity, you and I are so much alive to?—O! how should I exult in the power of my charms, that could
not

not only have retained the attachment of a very fine young gentleman, for so many successive years, but so perfectly eradicated every tincture of impropriety from his composition. Can any thing be more flattering, than to behold a profelyte of one's own making—a profelyte to one's irresistible merit—had such eclat awaited me, my whimsical brain would certainly have been overturned—and yet you will find this equal-minded woman will lament, and make such an affliction of the matter, that I question if it does not, for some time, retard the re-establishment of her health.

Freeman, as I have already told you, makes a most valuable husband; I am not such a wretch, as either to wish to recall the confession, or refuse confirming it; he is a very decent figure—has an entertaining turn, and tells a story with such good nature and drollery, that you would doat upon him: but when I reflect that it was only ask and have—nay, that I myself almost made the first advances,

vances, or his humility would have kept him till this blessed moment, for ought I know, at awful distance—I could half regret yielding myself so quietly, even to a situation, that I have *just* sense enough to prefer, to whatever I have seen or known since the hour of my birth.

I should have played off a few airs at least; or suppose, in order to have wound up the amour with some spirit, I had, in the last month of his probation, given him a booby I had heartily despised as a rival; when, having harraffed him some time, and exposed him to the danger of a broken head (for your apothecaries are no swords-men) I might have condescended to a reconciliation, laughed at his folly, and patched up the wedding in a trice; the man, poor soul, would then naturally have concluded, that all his sufferings were at an end, especially, as I, on the first setting out, should have assisted the pleasing deception, till I found him in that kind of security, that would
render

render him most sensible of a disagreeable change—then rebelling all at once, I should have given him to understand, that such supineness was never intended for him, I might have brought him to obey my nod, and subscribe to my absolute sovereignty.

Instead of which, we are the veriest turtles in nature; *my* will undoubtedly is *his* law; but would you believe it, I am so mean, as to suit it to what I am convinced is his private inclination: so that when he conforms to it with a shew of obliging me, he is in reality only obliging himself.

But surely this levity is ill-timed, when my friends health is affected—yet to anticipate, is to suffer a double, nay a treble portion of misery. I must preserve, I must exercise my spirits, for her sake; the time is now approaching, my Penelope, when I may with propriety call forth her smiles, and re-animate a spark of vivacity in her heart.

Leicester

Leicester has been dead above six months ; and many a lady has, in a much shorter period, not only been married to a second husband, but so heartily weary of him also, as to be equally impatient to rid herself of him, in an honest way.

I have only one piece of advice to give you, my dear, and shall then conclude.

You can never be so foolish as to fall in love with my idle flights ; no, my good girl, if you can discover one decent feature, in my real character, as a wife or friend, adopt it, if you please, for your rule of action—but never suffer yourself to be misled, by the vanities of even

Yours, &c.

M. FREEMAN.

LETTER XXXI.

From the Same to the Same.

LORD Clerage, as Mr. Clayton, my Penelope, has been admitted to visit his fair mistress, Freeman, and we all drank tea with her. A

A warm room, and the conversation of friendship, will insensibly communicate a glow both to the complexion and heart.

No face was ever fairer than Mrs. Leicester's, no eyes brighter, softer, or more intelligent. She appeared this afternoon to uncommon advantage; a blush, more lovely than any thing I ever saw in nature, adorned her cheek—and her beautifully shading eye-lashes, could not be disregarded, her mouth, her teeth, her hair, are just such as madam Diana is supposed to be distinguished with; her hand and arm (I always wear gloves when seated near them, to prevent mine from being intirely out of countenance)—but my Lord shall one day describe them to you, with very many other striking graces both of person and mind.

But her ugly cough would frequently check our admiration, by awakening us to the alarming consciousness, that even that finished creature was subject to the common lot of mortality.

She

She thanked us all in the sweetest terms, for our tender care and obliging assiduity towards her—observing how a few years had branched out *mine* in particular, as she had no doubt but her children would reap the benefit of my extraordinary partiality for their mother. Mrs. Le Fever, she added, would be esteemed for her own sake—but her helpless innocents, could alone experience the offices of benevolence, in pity to their tender age, or from an extension of that friendship, which had been so liberally dealt out to their fond parent. To have them defended from the miseries of life, and the contagion of ambition and vanity, was her last and most earnest wish.

We endeavoured to divert her thoughts from such serious considerations—but she frequently recurred to them, as if to give them their desired impression upon our hearts.

She must be sensible of her declining state; tho' she forbears the direct mention
of

of it; and fought in this moment to convey some distant preparation to us.

But how prompt we are to fear—where we so abundantly love. She is visibly better, will get abroad next week, and must soon recover her usual chearfulness.

Mrs. Le Fever was not much affected by her conversation, by being accustomed to it, I suppose—but, my Lord, Freeman and myself, were searched to the quick by it—the afflicted lover, looked now on me, and then upon Mrs. Leicester, as if he intreated me to give him that hope, he could not find in his own breast.

We told her, Mr. Clayton intended to leave us the latter end of the next week.

She was much concerned at the news—professed her gratitude for the many favours he had conferred upon her, and best wishes for his future happiness.

I shall be glad when he is gone, since it is necessary we should be separated for some little time, for I suspect we shall have fine work in the farewell scene—if

we

we may judge from what his voice and countenance betrayed in the bare contemplation of it—but I shall advise him to slip away without any tender ceremony.

I do not suppose, that ever man had a truer affection for woman, and they must be happy.

The little fellow has been called Augustus, (these great men, have always half-a-dozen great names) after his Lordship—tho' Mrs. Leicester is far from conceiving the reason—so Philip by accident, and Augustus by intention, will have equal recommendations to his favour.

We had some difficulty to reconcile the humble mother to so noble an appellation; the very name, said she, will fill his infant mind with those lofty sentiments, from which I am so anxious to secure him.

We rallied her upon the only weakness we had ever discovered her capable of; and begged her to recollect, that both Cæfers and Alexanders followed the plough in her very neighbourhood; and she could
not

not surely wish the fate of Augustus to be inferior to theirs; besides, we added, it was Mr. Clayton's request, who begged she would allow him to be one of the god-fathers, and could not be refused.

This last plea overcame her, and she can now boast a Philip, an Augustus, and a Mary (there have been *queens* of the name, Madam, though perhaps not in ITHACA) in her tender progeny.

* * * * *

Lord Clerage has left us—left us in the utmost disconsolation.

Mrs. Le Fever had so much esteem for him, that her regret is heart-felt; I wish it was convenient to let her into his secret history—but to tell her, would be to tell her daughter (for they can keep nothing from each other but misfortunes) which would be bounding infinitely beyond what is consistent with our present views and designs.

We now begin once more to live. Mrs. Le Fever, and Mrs. Leicester, have filled

up every vacancy at our happy table (except one little place reserved for his lordship,) whom I expect to hear from every day on a new account, and cannot help being alarmed for the consequence. Yet it cannot surely be a grievance, to have the prospect of being a woman of quality; her nature is susceptible of every natural impression, and this can never be resisted if she is human.

Poor Freeman has but an uneasy time of it; I am incessantly buzzing, either my hopes or my fears, in his honest ears, from the instant he enters the doors, till the moment he quits them: he smiles most pleasingly at the one, and pathetically shakes his head at the other.

It is well you live at some distance; for I am satisfied you would so approve him for his humanity, his good humour, and twenty other perfections, that, in the end, you would wish your friend fairly out of the way, to give yourself an opportunity

portunity of setting your cap at so much merit.

But you simple girl you, do you consider, that an attachment like ours, could not be dissolved without much bustle. The long-drawn face, the impending hat-band, how would you encounter them? to have days and weeks, and months pass away, yet the remembrance of his Polly unobliterated; could you persevere in spreading the repeatedly successful bait—no, no, believe me, so much trouble would attend the attempt, that you had better pray for the continuance of Mrs. Freeman's life, and direct all your allurements to some other quarter.

I have ran my eye over what I have written, and find so little in it either to entertain or instruct, and you know I am passionately fond of both, that I will defer sending it in till I can add an account of his Lordship's proceedings; and lest they should require a large space of paper,

per, I will break off abruptly, and pursue my avocations.

It is as I apprehended ; Mrs. Leicester is thrown into the greatest consternation, dilemma and affliction, imaginable, by Lord Clerage's declaring, by a note, his intention to visit her.

I undertook his cause——

My dear Kitty, said I, consider what is due to yourself and family ; how precarious your dependence upon the haughty and capricious Lady Catharine ; and how much my Lord has already done for you ; you cannot, you ought not to persist in your refusal of him.

O my mother, O my children, exclaimed she, your interest and happiness will ever be my leading spring of action——but a second marriage is contrary to all my resolutions, my principles ; and especially with a man that once so outrageously persecuted and tormented me.

You do not, my dear, returned I, act, upon this occasion, agreeable to your character—can you be so unrelenting, as to accept of no humiliation? No—

My much valued friend, cried she, interrupting me, you must not espouse so improper a cause; when Lord Clerage was pleased to honour me with his addresses, I was not the woman I now am. Youth, and unimpaired health, were at least mine, and the interesting incumbrances of domestic life, not only foreign to my possession, but strangers to my heart. Yet at that very period, only newly reduced from affluence, and unpractised in the inconveniences of poverty; with much latent vanity, and an infinite portion of pride, I pronounced him not the man I could make choice of; and shall I now betray myself into so unequal an union. Shall I endeavour to strike out a spark of ambition, where no materials have been lodged; it is impossible; he is still young and gay, how unfit

unfit a wife must I then be for him ; my constitution has received some shocks, that will expose me to an early old age, and my vivacity is wholly extinguished ; is there no way of saving my children, but by sacrificing myself ; of making my mother happy, but at the price of my own peace ; or of satisfying my friends, but by delivering up myself to what my very soul abhors—yet I will suffer him to behold me, resumed she, after a short pause——wan and drooping as I am, it must restore him to his reason—he shall visit us, my Freeman, and if we cannot accomplish, we will subdue his wishes.

I was obliged to let her enjoy this flattering hope ; it has, my dear, intirely possessed her ; and I could perceive, that she actually exulted in her faded charms, as she viewed herself transiently in the glass, from considering it as the only means of securing her, from what she is so extremely averse to.

But I have been told, Mrs. Penelope, that there is a wide difference between refusing an overture of this nature, in the first and second person—my Lord has rhetoric, my Lord has resolution; and that he may prevail, is the earnest wish of

Yours, &c.

M. FREEMAN.

LETTER XXXII.

Lord CLERAGE to Sir GEORGE HENDON.

HOW egregiously we deceive ourselves, George; my vivacity seemed indeed to be totally subdued, but a single ray of complacence from that soft power that held it in bondage, has now called it forth to new life and vigour.

I arrived at Brickley about 12 o'clock, and sent my compliments to the family of families.

Freeman

Freeman immediately waited upon me, and with all the worthy rapture, such souls as his are only capable of, welcomed me to the place I had so lately quitted.

I enquired after his wife Mrs. Le Fever, but above all, my Mrs. Leicester; he looked a little discouraging; I would not however imbibe the mortifying intimation, but determined to judge for myself by the reception I met with.

I found Mrs. Le Fever, Mrs. Freeman, Philip, Polly, and their beloved mother, all assembled in the well-known parlour.

Without doubt, she had endeavoured to prepare herself for the ren-counter, but her countenance nevertheless evinced, that her heart was not wholly unagitated.

Philip, tho' little turned of three years old, soon learned to caress me; and if the mother's eyes were unpropitious to her lover, she beheld his love for her children, with visible approbation.

We dined together—she behaved with all that ease and dignity, I so much admired on my first acquaintance with her. The afternoon declined, yet no prospect of exchanging one interesting syllable.

I gave Freeman an item—he communicated it to his wife, but not so dexterously, as to escape Mrs. Leicester's observation.

My Lord, said she, the reserves that are amiable at one age, are absurd at another; this company and myself are well apprized of your generous intention; and I beg we may give the matter a fair discussion in the circle of friendship.

So far from being under the least disadvantage, by complying with my request—your cause will be strengthened; you have gained the whole party, by your unexampled constancy, and other merits, which I will not now enter upon. I only beg to be allowed to paint things as they strike me, and if you can prove my objections to be frivolous or insignificant,

nificant, I will submit to the general decision.

We yeilded the point; tho' predetermined to be unconvinced.

It is now some years, my Lord, resumed she, since you made me the same noble offer you now condescend to repeat. At that period, my youth, education, and the recent sufferings of my father, in the cause of his country, might in some degree have excused the warmth of your attachment, and reconciled the world to so unfuitable an union. I was then, however, not only pre engaged in my affections, but strongly prejudiced against some part of your character. I refused you, my Lord—give me leave to awaken your pride, by repeating the indigent Kitty Le Fever, haughtily refused you, and married the man of her acknowledged preference. You surely must recollect all the rage and indignation this treatment occasioned you to feel. That man is now no more, but notwithstanding his body is lodged in the

grave, his memory lives, and will ever continue to live in his wife's heart—three children have survived him, poor unportioned children; at this moment dependant on the bounty of a woman that has stipulated to withdraw it, if their mother renounces her widowhood. You must remember Kitty Le Fever's person—Mrs. Leicester hardly bears any resemblance of her—her spirits are depressed, her mind strongly, strongly disinclined to change her condition, and incapable of loving even your Lordship; ought you then to advance such a being to the participation of your rank and fortune. Nay, this is not all; she has a mother, whose happiness is dearer to her than her own, from whom she is resolved never to be separated—what a houseful of beggars, my Lord, might you boast, if you was to persist in your evidently not well-considered resolution. Disgusted by the cold behaviour of your wife, and distracted with the noise and confusion of *her*, Leicester's children,

children, your home would become hateful to you; and the ridicule of your friends would restrain you from going abroad; thus would your life become a burthen, and you would not fail to curse the hour that had been witness to your obtaining so preposterous a wish, as uniting yourself to the inconveniences I have described—you seem impatient, my Lord, to reply, but weigh well your determination, for your future happiness absolutely depends upon it.

My dear Mrs. Leicester, cried I, have I not heard you to the utmost, without even attempting to interrupt you? Only allow me the same privilege, and I have little more to ask. My answer, indeed, will not long detain you; I have never tasted felicity since your refusal (words have no terrors for me, it was the deed that stabbed me to the heart,) of me, nor have I any other prospect of being restored to it, than by your acceptance of me. I love Mrs. Le Fever, your children are

dear to me; my fortune is sufficient for us all. Your serious conversation will delight me beyond all the giddy fallies on earth, and I will never cease my solicitations, until you consent to be mine.

Her features fell in that peculiar manner that denotes disappointment.

I cannot contend, my Lord, said she, it is not for me to fight against my own interest. For my mother and childrens sake alone, I wish my days to be prolonged, and what is it that for their sakes I would not endure?—But the concession is unworthy your acceptance, and I shall think meanly of you, if after what I have said, you can resolve to make the fortune of even my own dearest relations.—I will retire, and hope to hear you have renounced so ignoble a purpose.

She left us, and you may guess the result.

In about half an-hour's time, she returned, unsent for, no affectation, no presumption, I am grieved to perceive
what

what I cannot but admire, for is it not the strongest mark of cold indifference.

Freeman was disappointed, that I would not take up my residence under his roof, (it would not have been the first time, George,) but sensible of Mrs. Leicester's delicate fancies, I had guarded against every disgusting contingency, by borrowing a friend's house at about four miles distance, during my continuance in the country.

I departed at eleven, and have thought of nothing but my approaching happiness, until this very moment, that I am setting out to breakfast with my old approved friends.

I am, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER XXXIII.

Mrs. FREEMAN to Miss GIBSON.

THE grand tryal, my Penelope, is over, and she has tacitly consented to favour Lord Clerage's renewed suit.

She insists upon it, that one year and one month of her widowhood shall elapse, before she is entertained on the subject of a second love. She kindly promises to do all she can to join inclination to duty, and grows less and less averse to the late formidable man.

But, my dear, even whilst she so agreeably amuses us, we cannot be insensible that she is stealing from us, and will too probably be soon beyond our utmost reach. We consulted a physician yesterday, who is of opinion, that she is in a deep decay.

Two months are yet unexpired of the time, she requires to be mistress of herself—but she can never be so near her final dissolution; her frame, her complexion are so delicate, that they deceive every beholder—and are more durable than we imagine, nor will her poor children be left destitute.

My Lord is with us every day. Not a word of love—but friendship, the most exalted friendship is his darling theme.

Mrs.

Mrs. Le Fever blesses the day that her daughter became acquainted with him, and will more abundantly bless the one that gives him to her for a son.

Preparations are already carried on, (tho' without Mrs. Leicester's knowledge) Lady Catherine has already been applied to; and she declares herself not only in the same mind with respect to the seven thousand pounds, but offers to make it ten, and settlements are to be drawn accordingly. Death, all-tremendous death, forbear to interrupt so noble a work.

Poor Freeman—shall I tell you how fond he is grown of a little *quality binding*, my Lord, and your Lordship, is perpetually falling from his lips; and I shrewdly suspect, he enjoyed less satisfaction, (an ungrateful wretch) in the contemplation of his own great day, than he experiences in that of his Lordship's.

I wish he may not have reason to repent the notions I shall imbibe upon the occasion. To be so courted, who would not
be

be a widow? To be so provided for, who would not be a second time disposed of?—Yet he may as well live—inferior and imperfect as he is, in comparison of his great benefactor—for you know, Penelope, as I am not a Mrs. Leicester, I might too probably sigh out the remainder of my existence in solitary discontent.

My Lord proposes, if her Ladyship (my heart dances at the sound,) can undertake the journey, to carry her to the German spaw—the Bantlings and Mrs. Le Fever to remain at Brickley.

Her Ladyship must have a companion of her own sex, to render the expedition pleasing—many a female would be glad of such an opportunity of seeing the world, and but one, my dear, can be so happy as to enjoy it—can you not guess who that one may be—even honest Freeman's wife, if he can prevail upon himself to support her absence for so long a period. But he has always made a point of preferring her happiness

happiness to his own, she has therefore nothing to fear from that quarter.

I could never have been convinced of the power of dress, but from ocular demonstration. Mr. Clayton had the utmost appearance of a sober, worthy gentleman—but Lord Clerage is quite the agreeable man of quality—that ever my friend could refuse him and make choice of—there is no accounting for fancy, and I ought to be silent.

Mrs. Leicester has just left me, she is weak and low-spirited; I felt the shock, and severely censured myself for the folly I had been practising; and to add to my mortification, she expressed a desire to read what I had written.

You know my disposition, said I, I was all hope in the moment I exercised my pen, and my stile is consistent with its dictates. But your paleness and dejection have given such a new turn to my thoughts, that I myself could not bear to run it over,

ver, judge then how unfit it must be for your perusal.

My dear Freeman, cried she, why will you suffer yourself to be so grossly misled by idle delusions; it is not my wedding, but my funeral, you will be called to attend. I feel myself die daily, tho' I would spare you as much as possible, if I did not fear the stroke would be the heavier by your being unprepared for it. I cannot have many weeks longer to continue with you; yet you leave me to perform the task of resigning myself to the awful change alone and unassisted. You will behold death as an enemy, and fly the idea of him with horror; but there is a method to disarm him of his terrors, and teach us to welcome him as our tenderest friend. I will sit down with you, and for once speak all that is in my heart. You have been an eye-witness of the inconveniences, the fond affection of poor Leicester, frequently exposed me to; they could not always be concealed. You may remember

remember how wisely I thought I had chosen—and how I hugged the dear deceitful expectation of a long succession of happiness. You was likewise privy, in some measure, to my disappointment; Mr. Leicester was not proof against the only infirmity of his nature, jealousy, and that was the source of every error—he was taken away, however—and I am left to accomplish my last great work without interruption; nor should I find it difficult, if you did not all conspire against me—you are affected—ah! this is ever the case—and I must die in silence, and leave you comfortless.

Freeman came in at this juncture; his wife's tears were too precious to be disregarded by him—but when he heard the cause he could have joined his own—and to avoid that strongest evidence of humane sensibility, he hurried out of the apartment.

What will be the event of all these threatening appearances, heaven only knows!

knows ! She does not grow better, and must be conscious of her own sufferings—but how shall I support—the thought, the thought alone is beyond measure insupportable.

I am, &c.

M. FREEMAN.

LETTER XXXIV.

From the Same to the Same.

WE can no longer resist the evidence of our own senses—Mrs. Leicester is unable to quit her room, and will soon be no more.

Lord Clerage—how would you compassionate him ? is utterly hopeless—yet has he the resolution to preserve an outward composure ; he seldom indeed speaks but with his eyes—and they are abundantly anxious and inquisitive.

She

She is subject to violent faintings, in one of which Freeman supposes she will go off.

And can I not only write, but behold such heart-wounding characters—I am callous, my dear, at present, but depend upon it the last stroke will not be unfelt.

I no longer wonder at all the elegies, the beautiful complaints your poets, whose souls have been touched, have laid before us. I myself could for ever dwell upon the excellencies, the merits of my sweet departing friend. But let me not rob her of one moment's due attendance—I can write to you, when she, alas! is beyond my utmost care.

Yet I will give you the changes, the operations of this cruel undermining, incurable disorder, as opportunity offers.

I have much to engage my tender attention. Lord Clerage, Mrs. Le Fever, my husband—but who shall soothe my woes, or from whence can they derive the slightest

slightest mitigation—the power alone that inflicts them, can relieve them.

She is dying at this very period, in that slow peculiar manner of consumptions, tho' not yet confined to her bed; nor will she be prevailed upon to deny herself the sight of her children.

She has had a severe fit this very morning—we all imagined it would have been her last—but she fell into a gentle sleep, from which I hope she will awake refreshed.

She sends for me—I will not trespass an instant upon that patience, that is sufficiently executed by suffering.

Let me, let me, Penny, endeavour to describe such a scene to you, as sure no mortal was ever before a spectator of.

I entered Mrs. Leicester's apartment trembling—perhaps, thought I, I am only called to behold her last agonies—but I found her seated in her easy chair, with a chearfulness of aspect, I could little have expected.

My

My Freeman, said she, with a quick (and for her strong) voice, where is Lord Clerage; I must see him this instant; tell him I intreat it as a particular favour, and I am certain he will oblige me.

I soon brought him, agreeable to her desire.

My Lord, said she, I am persuaded it was your intention to have made my life happy, you will not then, I hope, hesitate to render my death so. It is not proper you should now solicit me—and the circumstances I am under, sets me above all form—I may surprize you—but I now earnestly intreat you to accept that hand you have hitherto been refused. Was I not intirely convinced of your merit, even at this late hour, I would disdain the union—but you deserve my thanks, you deserve my prayers. Tell me then, will you consent to relieve my mind from its extremest anxiety—I see your Lordship's distress, your tears, Freeman, greatly disturb me; nor shall I have the strength to bestow

bestow my poor weak hand, if I am happily successful in my application, unless you can resolve to assist and support me.

My Lord took her hand as it was dropping upon the arm of the chair—kissed it eagerly; and I could perceive, shed some tokens of affection upon it, that could not fail to be grateful.

It is too much, my Lord, too much my friend, said she—but you must be expeditious; let the licence be procured, let the settlements be signed; whoever expected I should quicken your Lordship in such a cause—but we will not spend that time in expectations, that ought to be employed to a much better purpose. The worthy Freeman shall give me away—my mother, all my friends shall be present—nor will the ceremony be long in performing, when once the necessary preparations are accomplished.

She hurried us away; me to inform Freeman, and Mrs. Le Fever of what
was

was to happen, and his Lordship to get the licence.

He pressed my hand as we went down stairs—we will support it, said he—bitter as the trial is, it shall be sustained—I fancy I can guess her motives—she is an angel—I have not deserved her—wretch that I am—but I will not complain.

We returned; she eagerly enquired if every thing was ready.

My most precious woman, said his Lordship, do spare yourself this violent exertion of your spirits—all is as you could wish—the parchments ready for signing, and—he could not speak the rest.

There must be no delays, said she, let them be duly executed, and we will then proceed to the other ceremony.

The lawyer was immediately introduced, and that business being speedily, tho' solemnly dispatched—his Lordship produced a private bond or instrument, which he begged of me to witness, and the
gentle-

gentleman's clerk was called in to do the same, but I am ignorant of the contents.

Mrs. Leiceſter deſired ſome drops—my treacherous ſpirits, cried ſhe, are beginning to forſake me; they muſt be aſſiſted, or diſappointment will at laſt be my portion.

In about ten minutes time ſhe reſumed her former earneſtneſs—the clergyman—we all aſſembled—but ſuch a marriage was hardly ever performed before—every one but the bride was in the deepeſt diſtreſs—however, her reſolution continued unſhaken until all was over, and every form ſubmitted to render the union valid.

My Lord kiſſed her hand again and again, in the anguiſh of deſpair—and her mother retired to give vent to her long reſtrained affliction.

She now dropped near to fainting; my huſband and his Lordſhip would have withdrawn—but ſhe beſought them to let her

her finish her work, as she could not expect to enjoy many more opportunities.

Your Lordship, said she, when she had somewhat recovered herself, cannot but penetrate my motives for the extraordinary steps I have taken. Lady Catharine consented to buy me a title, but she will purchase me the sweetest of consolations. The deception is not only innocent, but justifiable; I have conformed to her terms, and she cannot refuse the reward. My mother, my children will never presume to claim an alliance, which you, Sir, will be too generous ever to forget; and by securing such a friend to them, I die perfectly satisfied, and will thank you for your goodness and condescension, even with my latest breath.

My lovely creature, cried his Lordship, you may spare yourself all farther explanation. Your design, your view, was too obvious to be mistaken—and it must be a satisfaction to you to find, that the man you have so greatly honoured, as to choose

for the protector of your children, has put it out of his power to abandon them in what the world deems the most essential article—Mrs. Freeman, added he, be pleased to read the contents of this paper, (the one I had signed, my dear,) and we will close this most interesting scene.

Freeman obeyed this command, and I had the pleasure to find, that his Lordship bestowed the ten thousand pounds, he was to receive from Lady Catharine, equally amongst the pretty orphans.

It is compleated, my Lord, cried the delighted Mrs. Leicester, (laying her feeble hand upon his in a grateful pressure,) you have accomplished my every wish. Now all the difficulty is over—and another day or two, and I shall be—but you will vouchsafe to write to her Ladyship, and I could be glad to know the money was safely deposited.

What a happiness, that the writings had been prepared, (a circumstance which Mrs. Leicester drew out of me only the preceding

preceding evening)—I cannot add one thing more—after what I have now written, it is impossible, except that

I am, &c.

M. FREEMAN.

LETTER XXXV.

From the Same to the Same.

FOUR days have passed away, yet is this lovely, glimmering lamp unextinguished. My Lord seldom quits her apartment in the day-time; he reads to her; he administers her medicines, and is to receive the sacrament with her, so soon as the messenger returns from Lady Catharine.

She expresses some little impatience, now and then, at her Ladyship's delay—she is, indeed, unacquainted with the anguish of her present condition, she knows nothing of maternal anxiety—but surely

her politeness to Lord Clerage, should have induced her to be expeditious in her congratulations—she cannot depart until her answer is received.

The messenger is at last arrived, with a particular draught upon her Ladyship's banker for the promised sum; and now, as my friend expresses it, she has nothing to do, but to die.

She has performed all that she intended—has taken leave of her children, and his Lordship received every one from her as his own—she has charged me to remember her mother—but what will become of me, when I forget myself?

I am, &c.

M. FREEMAN.

LETTER XXXVI.

Mr. FREEMAN to Miss GIBSON.

Madam,

I AM enjoined, by my wife, to inform you of those particulars she is unequal to.

Mrs.

Mrs. Leiceſter, or rather Lady Clerage, has juſt breathed her laſt. She was dying laſt night, tho' perfectly in her ſenſes ; and about ſix o'clock in the morning ſhe expreſſed a deſire to ſee my Lord.

She intreated him to be comforted ; and to endeavour to ſupport her dear mother under her affliction.

Mrs. Le Fever would have entered the room, as alſo my wife ; but ſhe ordered the nurſe to admit no other perſon than his Lordſhip and me.

My Lord, ſaid ſhe, in a very low voice, perhaps you never ſaw any one die ; did you not expect the ſcene to be much more dreadful than you find it. You are ſtill a very young gentleman, and may live to loſe the remembrance of what even now ſo ſtrangely affects you—but I owe you—I owe you, reſumed ſhe after ſome moments ſtruggling, a proper impreſſion of this inevitable change. Thoſe that forget they are to die, will never live as they ought to do—you will not only retain,

but communicate the lesson to my poor children. Do not be discouraged from the practice of virtue, because all her votaries are not so happy as might be expected, I myself fell a victim in the first instance to filial affection—but does not that very consciousness at this moment smooth my bed of languishment, and cheer my poor drooping spirits—would we have the joys of mortality, and the blessed rewards of eternity to be ours—presumptuous, and unreasonable wretches! I could never have been useful to you in life, added she, after another interval of suffering, but reap all the benefit of my departure, and let both your heart and soul be reformed.

She lay for half an hour without speaking, and I prevailed upon his Lordship to retire, lest the sight of him should disturb her, if she did once more recover her sensibility.

She did again lift up her eyes, my mother, my children, my God, pronounced

ced she, very imperfectly—when falling into a succession of her faintings, she was at length subdued, never more to be restored to us.

You will kindly excuse my enlarging upon so melancholy a subject. Never was there a more afflicted family, or indeed I own, for she is universally lamented.

I am to acquaint his Lordship's friend, Sir George Hendon, of his circumstances—he has for some time been incapable of writing himself—but I hope his constitution will not yield to the violence of his grief.

Mrs. Leeson sends us word she will come down, attended by her faithful Jenny, and pass the remainder of her days with us, and exercise her best endeavours to console us all.

Can we, my dear Madam, prove unmindful of such a memento—could prayers or tears, or friends or fortune have prevailed, Mrs. Leicester had obtained a
happy

happy respite from this awful scene—but we may learn this piece of home philosophy, from her being torn so fatally from us—how insufficient and vain all human attempts, to avert the inevitable fate of all created beings.

I am, &c.

C. FREEMAN.

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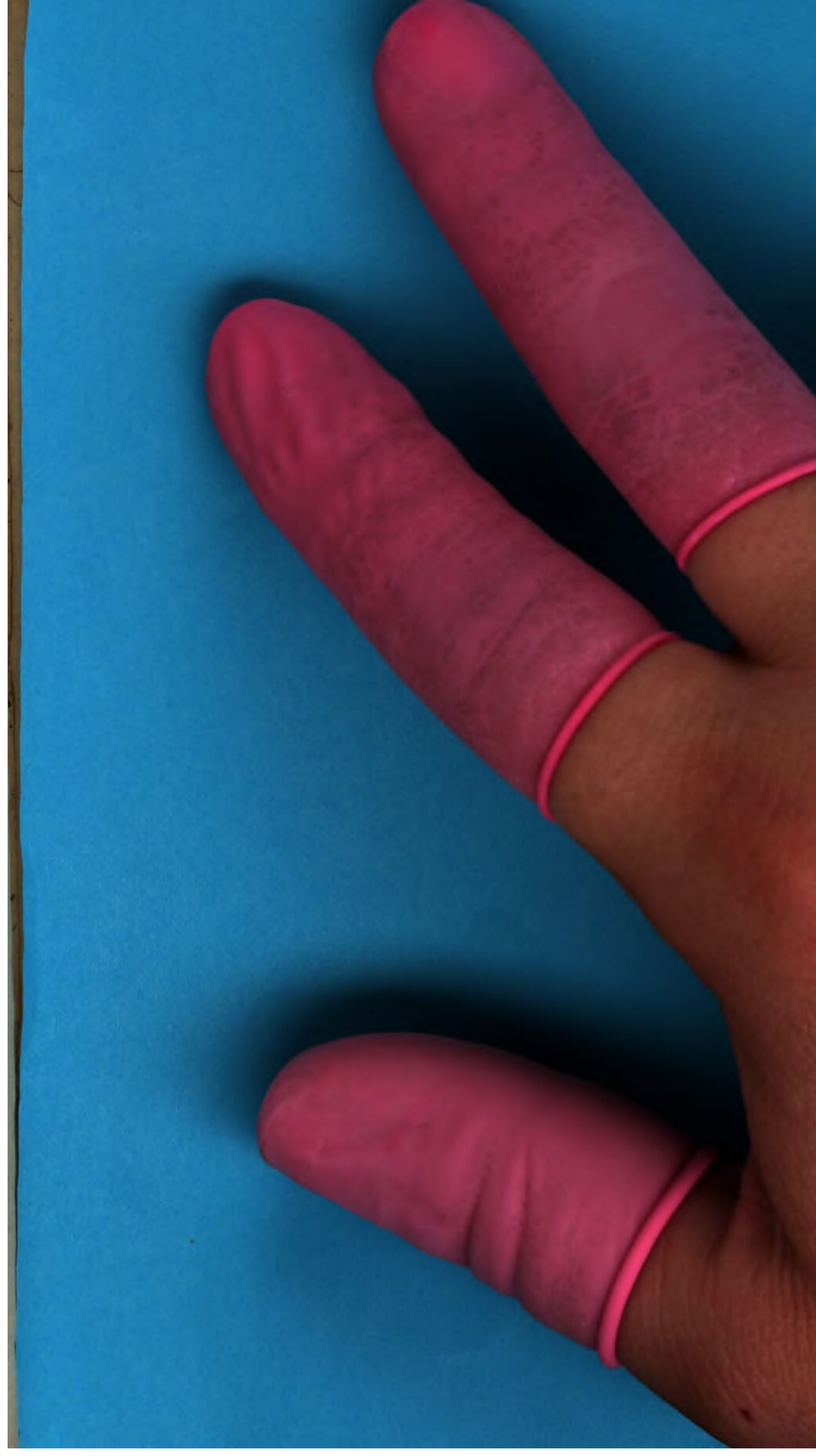
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